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Tuesday 22 March 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 41^e législature

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 22 mars 2016

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 22 March 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 22 mars 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2016 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 21, 2016, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I'm pleased to rise in the House this morning to speak to the budget motion. I'm very proud of the budget that our government put forward last month; I think all members of this House should be proud of our budget.

I've already heard from a number of my constituents in Scarborough–Guildwood about how the measures in this budget will make life easier for them. Whether I'm speaking to the young people who will now have the opportunity to access post-secondary education—and these are young people who never thought that this would have been possible—a young professional who wants to see investments in transit and transportation infrastructure, a parent who is concerned about safeguarding the environment for future generations or a senior who wants to ensure that their grandchildren will have access to a secure retirement, across ages and income levels, this budget has something for every Ontarian. When I look at this budget, what I see is vision and leadership. In 2014, we committed to a plan to build Ontario up, and that is certainly what we're doing in this budget.

I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to lead six in-person pre-budget consultations across this province on behalf of Minister Sousa earlier this year. I travelled from Sault Ste. Marie to Hamilton, Toronto, Kingston, Peterborough and Ottawa—to every corner—and I heard from stakeholders and individuals on valuable input from hundreds of Ontarians.

Our tele-town hall conference allowed us to engage with over 30,000 people from the GTA. I heard practical ideas about ways to grow our economy and make life a little bit easier for people from across this province. I heard about the importance of making strategic investments in infrastructure.

In our cities, Ontarians want to see investments in transit to help make the commute as seamless as possible.

In our northern communities, I heard about the importance of our northern highways program to ensure that people can flow seamlessly from point A to point B. I heard about the importance of bolstering education, training and entrepreneurship opportunities to ensure that all young people can have access to the tools they need to succeed in life, and I also heard about the importance of taking action on climate change now, so that we can protect future generations—just to name a few.

I am so pleased to see the feedback incorporated in our government's plan, and I know that Ontarians will feel confident that our government listened to their concerns. This budget is about ensuring that Ontarians are able to build the confidence they need in the future they hope for.

I know that students who came forward to consult with us on the budget—to speak about the barriers to access to post-secondary education and the importance of upfront financial assistance—are thrilled about this budget. I've heard directly from those students, Speaker. Thanks to our government's plan to modernize the Ontario Student Assistance Program, students who couldn't access post-secondary education will have the opportunity to do so. We believe that all students, regardless of background or circumstances, should be able to afford to go to college and to university. That's why we're combining existing financial assistance programs into a single, upfront grant that is more generous and more straightforward for our students.

This is something that is critical for young people in my community of Scarborough–Guildwood. The average household income in my riding is below the city average and the provincial average. We have one of the highest concentrations of Toronto Community Housing units in my community. For many of these families, post-secondary education has not been an option.

I recently visited Cedarbrae high school and was speaking to students in grade 10, telling them about the Ontario Student Grant. The look in their eyes was amazing. They asked me, "You mean this is for us? We will have the opportunity?" This was actually a group of young women who were part of a choir. I said, "Yes. All you have to do is study and prepare and get the marks you need to qualify." For many of them, post-secondary education was not a thought. Now, rather than worry about how they'll pay for it, they can focus on getting the grades they need to pursue the careers they want.

This is a game-changing opportunity for so many young people in our province. It's not just young people who will benefit; mature students, married students and

students who have been out of high school for more than four years will now have access to this grant support.

At the same time, we're also investing in jobs and in the economy so that, once people complete their studies, the jobs of tomorrow will be there for them. We're investing \$30 million in the Going Global export strategy, and \$400 million will go to the Business Growth Initiative to grow the economy and create jobs. We're doing this by promoting an innovation-based economy, helping small companies to scale up and modernizing regulations for businesses as well. Small companies like Dynaplas Ltd., an auto parts company in Scarborough, will benefit from these investments.

We're also making the largest investment in infrastructure in the province's history—

Ms. Daiene Vernile: How much?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: —\$160 billion over the next 12 years. This will help ensure that people can move to and from the places they need to be with ease.

0910

Scarborough–Guildwood residents are already benefiting from the improvements we've been making to regional express rail on the Lakeshore East line. Building the Scarborough subway is one of the most important initiatives that our government is doing to help the people in Scarborough to move seamlessly across this region and to participate in a connected network.

I recently spoke to a woman in my riding who told me about the two-hour commute, each way, that she makes for her customer service job. The investments that we're making will ensure that this woman and many others like her will have to spend less time commuting and will have more time with their family, doing the things that they love. It's about improving quality of life. For people in my riding, this is critical, and I know that this will pay dividends in the long term.

We're also taking leadership on addressing climate change. We know we have to act now to safeguard future generations. As a member who represents a lakefront community, I know first-hand the importance of ensuring that we're doing all that we can to protect the valuable resources that we hold so dear. The \$1.9 billion that we're going to be reinvesting in green projects will have a profound impact on future generations. We have a responsibility to do this.

Of course, I would be remiss if I didn't speak about one issue that is so close to my heart: retirement security. I want to thank the Premier for appointing me as the minister responsible for the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. We know that Ontarians aren't saving enough for retirement, and that's why we're moving forward with the ORPP: to help close the retirement savings gap and ensure that people can access a predictable stream of income for life. We've seen the economic analysis that was done by the Conference Board of Canada. They were clear that accounting for all factors, consumers and the economy will be better off under the ORPP. That's the kind of leadership that Ontarians expect from their government.

These are just a few of the changes proposed in Bill 173, the Jobs for Today and Tomorrow Act (Budget Measures), 2016. This bill continues the government's plan to build Ontario up and deliver on its number one priority, which is growing the economy and creating jobs. As we make these strategic investments, we're also doing so in a responsible way to ensure that we stay on our path to balance. Mr. Speaker, this is truly an exceptional budget, with something in it for all Ontarians.

I will be sharing my time with the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. So with that, I ask the support of this House in passing this very important legislation and in supporting Bill 173, the Jobs for Today and Tomorrow Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. I recognize the—hold on just a moment. Now, after station identification, back to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence to continue debate.

Mr. Mike Colle: It's a pleasure to follow the member from Scarborough–Guildwood, who comes from a part of Toronto that sometimes in the past was not given the attention it deserves. I can remember Mayor Joyce Trimmer and Mayor Gus Harris. These were amazing leaders in Scarborough who made sure that the rest of the greater Toronto area never forgot about the hard-working, incredibly patriotic people of Scarborough, who for many years were really the backbone of the GTA. The member from Scarborough–Guildwood carries on that tradition of those great leaders in Scarborough. If you ever get a chance, Mr. Speaker, I ask you to take a trip to Scarborough one day. One of the most beautiful parts of Ontario is on the Scarborough Bluffs. It's an amazing—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Bluffing is what we get from this government all the time.

Mr. Mike Colle: Well, if you think of the white cliffs of Dover, it's almost like a cousin of that beautiful scene right in Toronto. Anyway, I want to thank the member for her advocacy for the great people of Scarborough as she talked about the budget.

I would like to also refer to the budget as it relates to the middle of the GTA, the middle of the city of Toronto, and that's my riding of Eglinton–Lawrence. This budget continues to invest essentially in working people, in jobs. Without jobs, you can't have the social programs, you can't have the environmental programs and you can't have the supports in place. Having jobs is what pays for all these programs, and this budget invests in jobs.

In my own riding, we are building the largest public transit project in North America right now. That's the Eglinton Crosstown subway, which goes all the way from the area of Mount Dennis underground all the way to Laird Drive in Leaside, and then continues all the way to Scarborough, connecting basically the eastern part of the GTA to the western part.

I've been in that project. You can see the real result of these investments. These are jobs where people are tunnelling underground with these two giant tunnel borers, and the underground section of the entry points is as big as this chamber. The two giant tunnel-boring machines

are working underground, building public transit in the middle of the city of Toronto to carry people to work, to carry mothers to their children in child care. It relieves congestion; it relieves pollution.

Right now Eglinton Avenue, especially in the middle of the city, is clogged with gridlock. Sometimes you'll see up to 15 buses backed up at Oakwood and Eglinton. That's why we're putting the subway underground, so that there will be underground stations. Right now we're starting to build the underground station at Bathurst Street. We're building an underground station at Oakwood, one at Dufferin, one at Keele, and we're connecting it with the GO train so that people coming from Georgetown will be able to interconnect with the east-west subway line.

So these are the dollars in this budget that are investing not only in today's jobs, but this is the infrastructure that will keep on being part of the increased economic activity for decades to come. When they built the Yonge Street line, when Mayor Lamport opened it in 1951, they said, "Well, this is a nice little toy." But as you know, if you look up Yonge Street, you'll see all the people who work and live in the Yonge Street corridor; you'll see the incredible investment that the people of North York, with their subway, made in the Sheppard-Yonge area. It's a huge metropolis built on transit lines. When you invest in public transit, there's also housing that is built and there are commercial establishments that follow. So it's an investment that goes beyond just the transit investment.

That's what this budget is doing: It's investing for today, but also for jobs going forward. These are the jobs that pay well. Many of them are jobs where you have to have high skill. But they keep on giving beyond the job today. As you know, when Toronto is building subways, they're buying their subway cars and streetcars from Thunder Bay. So there are hundreds of people working in the plant in Thunder Bay, producing excellent subway cars and excellent streetcars, made by the people in northwestern Ontario. So there's a connection. It's not just about subways or not just about people riding them in the greater Toronto area; it's about people who work producing the steel and then the steel goes to Thunder Bay to build these wonderful low-floor streetcars and the new subway. If you ride the subway in Toronto, you'll see the new cars that have come in from Thunder Bay. They are state-of-the-art public transit vehicles.

0920

Also in this budget is an important investment in a project that I certainly feel very strongly about, and that is the investment in maternal health.

Every year, over 30,000 Ontario mothers unfortunately lose their children through stillbirth or pregnancy loss through miscarriage—over 30,000 every year. These are mothers who suffer in silence. They go to our hospitals and get medical treatment from our doctors and nurses, but many of them do not get the high-quality medical support and treatment they need, so subsequently they do not cope with the loss of a child. They do not cope mentally; they do not cope physiologically.

That's why we passed a bill in this House, Bill 141, to invest in the maternal health of women across the province who lose their children. In this budget there is about a million-dollar investment toward improving health care for mothers who lose their children. I know that is not a big amount of money compared to the whole scale of the budget, but believe me, to those families across Ontario that were not able to get the health care they needed when their daughter, their sister, their wife went through pregnancy loss, this investment in this budget toward maternal health is a critically important investment. It means that they might get the proper, compassionate care that is needed for them to recover from this traumatic, tragic loss.

Just think of it, Mr. Speaker: Over 30,000 mothers in the province go through this every year. Over 150,000 mothers go through pregnancy loss—not only in Ontario, by the way, but all across Canada—and our hospitals do not pay enough attention to the medical needs of these mothers. In this budget we become the first province in Canada to specifically invest in this part of maternal health care; that is, women who unfortunately lose their children through miscarriage or stillbirth.

I ask you to consider this budget. I think it's a very solid budget that invests in jobs that we all need and invests in health care that we all need. Thank you for listening, Mr. Speaker.

Questions and comments? The member for—

Mr. Bill Walker: Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm not normally here on Tuesday morning, Speaker; we forgive you.

It's a pleasure to speak to this budget.

Mr. Speaker, we came into this budget asking for three things. We asked the government to have a credible plan to make energy affordable in Ontario. We've heard from 85% of Ontarians saying, "Don't sell Hydro One." They're very worried about that. There's nothing in the budget to do with that.

We asked them to include a plan to properly manage Ontario's health care system and ensure that costs were at the front-line care, to actually provide services and programs significantly. There were a few baubles in there, Mr. Speaker, but at the end of the day we're hearing again that nurses are being cut, doctors are being cut and hospitals are on the block. We're very concerned there.

Then, we asked them to include a credible plan to balance the budget, including immediate action to pay down the debt. This government spends \$12 billion a year on interest payments, and that is just not something we can support and accept.

I was here at Queen's Park last week and did a media event to ask them not to go forward with their plan to double the cost of prescription drugs for seniors. It's something that I'm hearing from people across the province. They're very, very concerned that our seniors are not being respected if they're going to increase this. Up to 92% of seniors out there will see increases to their

prescription costs—this on top of the higher energy costs we have talked about in this House for the last year and a half. People are struggling. This government is making it harder for all Ontarians to be able to afford the things they do, want and deserve.

I've also pushed the government—nothing in this budget about the 30,000 long-term-care beds they have committed, in the last two elections, to redevelop and refurbish. We know that the waiting list at this point is 24,000 seniors, and it's going to double in the next six years. We wanted to see some things for that.

We want them to definitely give serious thought to reversing the decision on increasing these drugs and take those other three things into priority, or I can't support this budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is always a pleasure to rise in this House and debate issues relevant to my constituency in Windsor West and across the greater Windsor area.

The member from Eglinton–Lawrence talked quite a bit about transit in the greater Toronto area. He mentioned that there are projects under way to increase capacity for transit in the Toronto area, and then he kind of segued into how that creates jobs: When you increase transit in the greater Toronto area, that makes it easier for people to get to work and it makes it easier for parents to get to their child care providers.

I'm going to touch on the jobs piece and the child care piece. What we're looking at in this budget are a lot of cuts. We're losing doctors; we're losing nurses—we've lost 169 RNs in Windsor so far—and we're looking at, potentially, job losses in the education sector across the province, not just in Windsor. We've already seen these cuts begin with a \$430-million cut to education spending—that's a lot of jobs on the line.

One of the big issues that has come up recently is accessible child care. There is a potential change coming to child care regulations that is going to adversely affect many child care centres. It's going to be expensive. Many of the non-profit child care centres may be forced to close and may have to eliminate the infant rooms in their child care centres. That's less access to child care and fewer parents being able to go back to work after whatever parental leave they're entitled to.

I have great concerns about this budget and the cuts that are in it. It's not really moving Ontario forward; it's not building Ontario up; it's actually reducing the number of jobs out there for people in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm very pleased to rise this morning to speak about Bill 173, the Jobs for Today and Tomorrow Act, which was led this morning by the Associate Minister of Finance.

When a budget bill is introduced, what members usually do when they go into lock-up—I know I certainly did this as the MPP for Kitchener Centre—is you get the document and you start going through it, and you look

for any references that there might be to your particular community. In the hour and a half or so that I had with the budget document, I found 13 references to Kitchener and to Waterloo region, which I was very pleased to see.

Specifically to my region, to those people who are watching right now at home, I can tell you that there is good news there for our two local universities, Wilfrid Laurier and the University of Waterloo, and for Conestoga College with our piece for free tuition for students who come from families earning less than \$50,000. You've heard it said this morning, and you've heard it said over and over again, that this is a game-changer. Let me tell you, it is. In my community, I've had several young people come to me and say, "I wish that we'd had this when I was going to school." But now, here it is, and this is going to change the way that people are going to have access to university.

In my community, we're also seeing an advanced manufacturing consortium being established at the University of Waterloo. They're doing this along with Western and McMaster. I chatted with the head of government relations at U of W to find out what this is going to look like. They're essentially going to be connecting with industry to find out what they need to help train manufacturing leaders for tomorrow. There's also renewed funding for the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics in Waterloo, and they're very happy to get that funding.

Most importantly, in my region we're seeing renewed funding and continuing funding for infrastructure. Our transportation minister has committed to a significant announcement before the summer on all-day, two-way GO train service.

This is a progressive budget. It is building infrastructure and creating jobs, and I'll certainly be supporting it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Laurie Scott: It's a pleasure to rise today to make comment on the budget that has been brought forward by the Liberal government. I can just tell you that the people in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock weren't happy. They saw this budget as taking more money out of their pockets, making it more expensive in everyday life.

0930

The minister who started off today's debate talked about the ORPP. Nobody that's over the age of 26 is going to get any benefit from this ORPP that has been introduced. The government's own ministry said that it's going to cost at least 54,000 jobs. It's a job killer. I can tell you that small businesses in my area say they're going to lay people off. They just can't afford to hire people with this extra pension plan that the government is making mandatory upon them. The people that actually do have a job can't pay their hydro bills, and now you're taking another 1.9%, so essentially 2%, off their paycheques.

We talked about health care—which I could talk about forever, but I have a short period of time. Look, the hospitals are not getting the money they need to operate, especially with our aging senior population. I have a sig-

nificant seniors' population in my riding. They have been frozen for four years, and this is really a cut. Ross Memorial Hospital is fighting a \$3-million shortfall in what they need. The Minden and Haliburton hospitals need more money to provide the services that we think they deserve.

Long-term-care: I have the lowest ratio of beds available to demand in the province in my Central East LHIN. I've talked about Peterborough county having lists of 2,700 on the wait-lists. My own riding has close to 1,000 on wait-lists. That doesn't even include all of the Central East LHIN. And mental health: I've seen mental health cuts in my riding, and I have the second-highest demand in the province for that in my Central East LHIN.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on, but there are lots of reasons not to vote for this budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member for Eglinton–Lawrence for final comments.

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to thank the members from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Windsor West, Kitchener Centre and Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock for their comments.

I just want to say that most Ontarians and people in my riding like to talk about how hard-working the people of Ontario are, how proud they are of this great province and how they are leading Canada in economic growth. They talk about the cranes in the sky; we have got more cranes in the sky in the GTA than all other North American cities combined. That means jobs. I know it's the job of the opposition to talk down Ontario, but I think I prefer to talk up the people of Ontario. That's what it's all about.

When there's a proposal from the minister of financial affairs—the member from Scarborough–Guildwood—she talks about the need for pensions for people who work their whole life. It is just incredible that in this day and age, the Conservative Party is still opposed to giving people who work their whole life a decent pension when they retire. They're going to flip-flop on this, too, I guess.

This budget has an investment in the hard-working people of Ontario, whether you work in construction or whether you work in the health care field—there's an increase of a billion dollars in health care funding. All they say is, "There's less money." Well, there's a billion dollars more. There's \$345 million more for hospitals. There is more for children with autism and their services.

There's never enough, obviously. Obviously we've got to plug up some more holes, but generally speaking the people of Ontario want to build up this province. They don't want to drag it down.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I really appreciate the opportunity this morning to speak to this budget.

It's funny: The government comes here, and they've got their talking points and their way of putting forth what they think is every positive aspect of the budget, and it never really meshes with reality. In fact, I couldn't

find my copy of the budget. The one thing that the government did this year—maybe that's the extent of their austerity plan—is that they printed fewer copies, so it was harder to get copies in the hard paper version.

I couldn't find my copy, so I went to the library to find a copy. I was really finding it difficult, because I did what I thought I should do: I looked for it in the fiction section, and I couldn't find it. Finally, do you know where we found it? In the fantasy section. That's where we found a copy of the budget, Speaker: in the fantasy section. Yes, the fantasy section of the library. I knew I'd find it somewhere. I knew it wasn't going to be in the non-fiction or the reality section. Finally, I found it in the fantasy section.

But, as I say, the government members get up there and—do you know what I find really funny? The ministers will stand up here in question period and they'll say, "Why isn't the member from the third party" or "Why isn't the member from the official opposition telling about this wonderful"—what they see as this wonderful aspect of the budget. Well, you see, Speaker—and I'll say this in fairness—in every budget, there are going to be some good things and some really not good things. But, you see, it's not my job as a member of the opposition to talk about the things in the budget that I might even agree with. They're right: There are a few things in there. But that's not my job.

Do you think the government members are going to get up, the trained seals that they are, and talk about the parts of the budget that are wrong for Ontario? Of course not. That's our job: to speak about what's wrong in this budget and in every piece of legislation that this tired old government brings to this House. And we're going to do our job; as opposition, we're going to do our job. If it was left to the government members and their spin doctors, the people out there, the public in Ontario, would wake up and think, "My goodness gracious, what a wonderful world we live in, governed by Kathleen Wynne and the Liberals." Well, I beg to differ. Before I go on, I wanted to open up with that salvo.

But I did want to take a moment to pass on our deepest sympathies to the people in Brussels this morning. There were more terrible terrorist attacks in Brussels. I hope that our Prime Minister, having the big federal budget today, actually understands what a threat terrorism is and what a threat ISIS is, and he starts to take that seriously. He has been ignoring it and trying to pretend that we can't be affected by it here in Canada, and I hope that he changes his tune after these terrible attacks in Brussels today. As I say, our hearts go out to the families of those killed in the Brussels attacks—at least 28 dead and over 100 injured today.

This also brings me to another point. I'm very pleased, and I want to give my congratulations to my colleague our deputy leader, Steve Clark, the member from, as he says, the great riding of Leeds–Grenville. He understands that it's almost as great as the greatest riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I want to take my hat off to my colleague Steve Clark for showing leadership and keep-

ing the pressure on to ensure that our security force here at the Legislative Assembly was also fitted with firearms. It's long overdue, and thankfully the decision—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It was done by committee—overdue but, thankfully, now our security forces here at the Legislature also, as the ones in other Legislatures, have weapons to defend not only the public who's here but the people who live and work here at this Legislature. Anyway, I did want to make those points here this morning.

Back to the budget: I see the finance minister sitting here this morning. He's sitting in on these budget debates. He's pleased as punch with this budget. Why shouldn't he be? It's his budget. But at the end of the day, it's a question of what the impact is, the actual impact to Ontario—not the talking-point impact, not the spin-doctor impact that he's got all his minions here fanned out all across the province spreading the word about, the wonderful gospel of Sousa, that Ontario has never been better but will only continue to get greater under his fiscal tutelage.

Well, Speaker, it's not that way. I just jotted down a few things. We had a grandson born in December. Little Leo was born in the Northwest Territories, but I'm confident—and I don't think Emily and Tom are listening here. We're confident that they're going to come back to Ontario someday when it has some strong leadership and the future looks brighter. So I think they're going to come back to Ontario someday.

0940

But, you know, when little Leo comes back to Ontario—and I don't know how old he'll be at that time but, as soon as he crosses that border between here and Manitoba, he's going to assume a debt of \$22,000. The poor lad is going to cross that border and Emily and Tom are probably going to wonder why Leo started to cry when he crossed the Manitoba-Ontario border. The reason is because he just assumed \$22,000 of debt.

Under this government's leadership—leadership, Speaker—that debt has more than doubled in the 12 years they've been in power. In fact, it has gone from \$137 billion to \$308 billion. From \$137 billion to \$308 billion—one government. Well done. I hope you're proud of that—\$137 billion to \$308 billion. Can you believe it, Speaker? I can. Believe it; it's true. We have to accept that that's the one factual thing about the budget. The line items in the budget, the ones that are not projections or forecasts, are real—\$308 billion. The third-largest line item in that budget—the third, after health care and education spending—

Mr. Grant Crack: Interest?

Mr. John Yakabuski: The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell has even heard it in the coffee shops up in Rockland. He has heard it; they told him. “Do you realize,” they said, “Mr. Crack, the third-biggest line item in the budget is interest on the debt? What are you people doing down there?” And what do you do? You keep

adding and adding to the debt. Can you imagine, Speaker? Can you just imagine? We are—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much. Oh, look at that: The finance minister sent me another copy. Did he run down to the fantasy section?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Open it up.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He says, “Open it up.” Look at that; it's signed. Oh, what does it say? I don't have my glasses on, but it probably says something like, “Read this before I completely destroy Ontario.” Something like that, it says.

Anyway, that debt that they just keep building and building: What is the effect? They're worried about 2018. This is how this government looks ahead. They look ahead to only one thing: the next provincial election.

What about my little Leo? What about that generation? What about these pages sitting here in front of you, Speaker? What kind of Ontario are we going to bestow on them when we leave this place and maybe guys my age leave this place entirely, you know? What kind of Ontario are we going to leave them when we're building with this kind of debt?

Speaker, as I was beginning to say before I received the gracious gift from the minister, what about if interest rates climb? We are living through a period of some of the most historically low interest rates that we have ever experienced. But what would happen to Ontario if those interest rates increased? We're looking at almost \$12 billion in interest payments on the debt today. What would happen if those interest rates were to go up a couple of points or three points? Oh, my goodness gracious. You do not want to think of the calamity that would envelop Ontario—not just this government but everybody in it—because, historically, low interest rates have also led to a significant boom in housing sales and things like that. So the government is teetering on the thin edge of a knife, and hoping. Everything that they do is predicated on interest rates remaining low.

Let's talk about some of the things that they don't talk about in the budget. You see, they want us to do their job as well as doing ours, so we'll leave it with this: We'll be glad to start doing your job right after the June 14, 2018, election. We'll start doing your job in a completely different way than you have failed to do it for the last 12 years. We'll start doing the job that puts Ontario first. That's the job we're going to do after 2018. But let's talk about the job they have—and I understand.

As I said, they fan out all across the province and they sing the praises of the gospel of Charles I. Then they tell everybody that Ontario has never been in better shape and it's going to get better. Then you see a little trickery with numbers—I can say “trickery,” can't I, Speaker?—a little sleight of hand.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's not a scheme, though.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It is a scheme. It's worse than a scheme, I say to the member from Beaches–East York. It's more like a scam. Can I say “scam”?

Interestingly enough, here's how they have fun with numbers: A month ago they were talking about their 10-year, \$130-billion infrastructure plan. They come out with a budget and, in order to fool the people once again, it's no longer a \$130-billion infrastructure plan; it is now a \$160-billion infrastructure plan. All the members on the other side are going, "Isn't that great? Isn't that great?" They're all applauding the minister, "Wow." Then we find out there's not another plug nickel going into infrastructure; they're just extending it to a 12-year plan. The Toronto papers probably had a thing, "\$160-billion plan for infrastructure highlights Liberal Ontario budget." Not a thing. There's not another nickel going into infrastructure; they're just extending it by two years. It's really scandalous.

But what would I know about scandals? These are the experts on scandals. My God, they wanted to add to one yesterday. They wanted to buy helicopters that don't work from an Italian firm that's already in court—leasing two more helicopters because they didn't learn enough from the Ornge scandal. So when I say "scandalous," I really don't have as much experience with the word as these people have. I've said it; they've lived it.

We don't want to talk about scandals because, my goodness gracious, I look up at the clock and the next thing you know I'm running out of time. Let's talk about something here that the Liberals don't want to talk about: seniors.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Talk about the budget; that's what you're here for.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's exactly what I say to the member from Kitchener Centre. You know what? If you sit there for a few more minutes you're going to have a chance to respond to this.

Let's talk about seniors' drug costs. I really want to give credit to my colleague who sits next to me, the member for Nipissing, our finance critic, Vic Fedeli, who brought in his Fedeli Focus on Finance, volume 3, number 2, February 2016. He does a great job as our finance critic. He also highlights the chicanery and the sleight of hand in the Liberal budget talking points.

Here are a couple here: seniors' drug costs. The Minister of Finance and the Minister of Health are going on about how this is a great deal for seniors and how more people will be getting their drugs for free under this plan, according to the government. But they've got a cut-off of at around \$19,000 annual income. If you make over \$19,000—now, in 1950 that was a pretty good wage, but I hate to break it to the Minister of Finance but we're living in 2016, and if your income is \$19,000 in 2016, I don't care how frugal you are; that's not a lot of money. That's not a lot of money. So what's going to happen to our seniors, our most vulnerable, the generation that helped build this country? They're going to pay more. They're going to pay more for their prescription drugs under this plan, and the Liberals are getting hammered on this.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I say to the member for Davenport: The Liberals are getting hammered on this when

they go home to their constituencies. She knows it and they all know it.

0950

People are fed up, especially rural people. In fairness to the member from Davenport, she may not experience it as much as I do. I know my colleague for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock—we live in some of the ridings that have some of the highest percentage of seniors in the province, and some of the lowest average incomes. I think the county of Haliburton is the only one that might be lower than Renfrew county, as far as average income in the province of Ontario. A lot of those people—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member made a comment a few moments ago—

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask that the member withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, I withdraw. Whatever it was, it was so long ago it may never be remembered, but I withdraw anyway. Out of respect for the Chair, I withdraw.

We have some of the lowest incomes and the highest percentage of seniors, so when we go home to our constituencies we hear about it, because we're being affected. Our people are being affected, and they are not being helped by this budget.

Hon. Charles Sousa: They're getting it for free.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, "free." Interestingly enough, the finance minister pipes up across the aisle. He says "free." "Free" is what he claims—excuse me. My throat is getting dry; I may need more water. "Free" is what he said was going to be "free tuition," as he chimed out proudly on budget Thursday. And the Liberals caucus—spontaneously, of course—applauded with glee.

Well, there's always a caveat. There's always the fine print and the asterisk—you know, like they used to put beside Roger Maris's name in the record books when he hit 61 home runs? They used to put an asterisk there because he broke Babe Ruth's record. Babe Ruth did it in a 154-game schedule; Roger Maris did it in a 162-game schedule. Not that that's pertinent to this budget, but I just thought I'd throw the story of the asterisk in there. That was probably the most famous asterisk we ever read about in history.

So there's a little bit of asterisk around that "free tuition." It's sort of like when you go on to the Internet and you want that free credit score. Then, when you look into it, you've got to sign up for this, this, this, this and this. There's a buy-in.

Oh, my goodness gracious, I'm looking at that clock; I need more time, Speaker. I need more time.

There's a buy-in for the free tuition. Can you believe it? A buy-in. But doesn't a buy-in actually cost something? This is the kind of messaging that they expect their people to go out and spread across Ontario as good news.

I want to talk about that for the few seconds I've got. You look at the fairness. Even in their words, if the

family makes under \$50,000, the average tuition is covered—if you make \$50,000 and you've got one child in post-secondary. But if you make \$84,000—that's \$34,000 more on the gross; not the taxable, on the gross—and you've got four children in post-secondary, who do you think actually needs the help more? Are they against families with children?

I say to the minister: Do you want one-child families? Come on, now. We're not going to institute a one-child rule here in Ontario, are we? What about families that have four kids? What are you going to do with them for post-secondary education? The finance minister has to stand up and straighten out this mess. If free is free, then make it free.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm so excited to follow the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. That is a tough act to follow, so I'm not going to try to compete. I'm just going to comment.

I definitely appreciate learning from the members in the room and hearing their opinions. I also appreciate what the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke remarked at the beginning about our role in the opposition benches versus the role of the government: that with every budget, there are plums and barbs, and that perhaps we're going to highlight different parts of the budget.

As I'm sitting here and reflecting on this grand chamber, I'm reminded of the eagle that is carved up there facing the opposition bench and the owl that is facing the government. We're supposed to keep an eagle eye on the government, and we do that. Sometimes we do that enthusiastically. Of course, the owl reminds them to be wise, so I would remind them to be reminded by the owl.

I also appreciated his reference to minions, just as a fun thing on a Tuesday morning. Learning about the member's—little Leo; his grandson little Leo and imagining little Leo's life in Ontario when he comes back and crosses the border. It is upsetting to know that children are going to be shortchanged—\$430 million out of education just this year alone, and \$1.1 billion in the past three years. So imagine little Leo's journey as this continues; imagine his journey through the health care system. In Windsor and Oshawa, we face terrible unemployment, and I certainly hope that we can work to remedy that situation so that all children, not just little Leo, will grow up in a healthful environment full of opportunity in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm delighted to have an opportunity to respond to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I had the opportunity to be in his riding on many occasions over my life—up to the Ottawa River, where we go whitewater rafting. The member is always so entertaining. It reminds me, actually, of going down the Ottawa River in a whitewater raft. There are many ups and downs. There's spray coming out everywhere. It's exciting and it's exhilarating, but it's not very edify-

ing. It really is just a lot of enthusiasm, but so little substance from a learning perspective.

But there were some things he had an opportunity to talk about that were very intriguing. His characterization of the members opposite as trained seals: I would have thought, Speaker, that you might have found—if it's okay to talk about trained seals on this side of the House—I'm reminded of Margaret Atwood, who once talked about there being no such thing as a male chauvinist pig in Canada. She was speaking to an audience at the Empire Club of Canada. All the business owners—businessmen—of Toronto were there, and she said that there's no such thing as a male chauvinist pig. Everyone jumped up in thunderous applause, and then they waited. And she said that we prefer to refer to them as “moose,” because the moose is bigger and dumber and easier to fool—male Canadian moose.

So I'm thinking, if we're the seals on this side of the House, what does that make the member on that side? Maybe a manatee, the mythical mermaid creature of lore; the manatee, which is large and thunderous and mills about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to remind the member from Beaches–East York that comments and questions need to be directed regarding the budget, which is what we are debating today. We're not getting into characterizations of individuals or of any opposition parties or government, as that pertains as well. I would ask that you stick to the—

Mr. Arthur Potts: Fair enough.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

Mr. Arthur Potts: The point is, we just had a big announcement, and the member from Huron–Bruce—\$3.3 million to the Blyth theatre. It's fantastic. There's great enthusiasm from that side of the House, and it's because we're spending that money on infrastructure. You should be saying thank you.

Interjection: In your ridings.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At least you got all my riding names in there.

I think the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke told you how it is out there. Why don't you listen to him? You don't think you can learn anything? Maybe you should listen not only to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, but to the rest of us on this side, because we're not making it up. We're hearing it from our constituents.

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes? Baby Leo is going to cry when he comes across the border because he just inherited a \$22,000 debt on every child. We all should be crying because it's disgraceful that the third-largest budget item in the province of Ontario is throwing money out the window on interest. It's a \$308-billion debt you have—\$1 billion a month. You should be ashamed that

you're wasting taxpayers' money on that. It's the worst record in Canada.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: You wanted to fire 100,000 people.

Ms. Laurie Scott: You have fired over 1,000 nurses over there, if you want to talk about firing people. How many civil servants have you fired? You have fired them. You guys are the spin doctors supreme; I give you that. There is no question. You say, for the poor seniors, that you're going to give them a break, so you raised it to \$19,000. That's not really a rich senior. And guess what? The shell game continues, because you've increased their hydro rates so high, they can't stay in their houses. That's the number one thing in my riding that has sent people into poverty.

1000

You have a so-called poverty reduction plan. What's the plan? You put more people into poverty than ever before in my riding. The seniors get out of their houses if they can because they can't afford to heat them during the day; they have to get out. Mr. Speaker, this budget has just put more people into poverty in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is a pleasure to rise again to add my two cents' worth—or in this case, two minutes' worth—to the debate on the budget. I wanted to talk about some of the things that the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke spoke about. I'm going to try to get through it even if there are interjections from the government side, because there seems to be a lot of back and forth between the official opposition and the government side.

The budget is called Jobs for Today and Tomorrow. My concern with this budget is that we're not going to see an awful lot of jobs past tomorrow, based on some of the items in the budget. As I said to you before, there is no money for child care. They're looking at making changes to child care, potentially making it less accessible and more expensive, and we're going to see fewer parents having access to child care, which means they're not going to be able to go to work—assuming, based on this budget, that they still have a job.

We've seen their commitment to taking \$430 million out of the education system. That's on top of \$500 million. So we're seeing job losses as a result. We're seeing now that they're doing consultations to close provincial and demonstration schools in order to save money. We are talking about some of the most vulnerable students, those with severe learning disabilities, those who are deaf or hard of hearing. These are the most vulnerable children, and they're now targeting them in order to save money, in order to meet their budgetary requirements. Apparently, those requirements are to cut and cut and cut services.

We've lost money for health care providers and for nurses in our hospitals. I have great concerns about their

so-called free tuition, which, according to the Premier herself, is not really free tuition.

I'm sure my colleagues will have more to add in depth on the budget. I appreciate the opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for final comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to thank the members from Oshawa, Beaches–East York, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and Windsor West for their comments on my address this morning. Three were quite complimentary and talked of other issues that affect them, but of course, the gentleman from Beaches–East York always takes this to a personal level. Where one person refers to the collective, another member has to try to degenerate it into a personal debate, but that's his style. I don't think it garners much interest in this chamber, to be quite honest with you, Speaker, but I've got big shoulders and thick skin. I can take that kind of stuff.

Let's talk about the budget itself. My colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock has done it. We bring our rural perspective to this House on a daily basis. As much as you might think you can understand rural Ontario by rafting on the Ottawa River—which is a wonderful experience, by the way, but if you really think you can understand rural Ontario by spending a few hours there, you're mistaken.

We garner that perspective from our people on a daily basis and bring it to this Legislature. When they look at how rural Ontario is affected by this budget—and the member for Kitchener Centre said something about a grant for work being done in one of our ridings. Well, are we not supposed to expect that a government does work in all ridings? Are we supposed to expect that only government members would have something done in their riding? How ridiculous is that? We don't thank the government. We thank the people in our ridings for making sure that the case for that project was made, and we'll continue to make that case in every one of our ridings, in every government program, to see that rural Ontario continues to try to get a fair share from this patently unfair government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm glad to add my voice to this debate. One of the major issues with this budget is that in terms of the marketing, in terms of the messaging, this budget sounds like it addressed issues that really matter to the people, but when you actually delve into details, what often occurs with this government is that the details really show something very different.

The member who just spoke talked about one of those issues, which is the notion of free tuition. It's absolutely irresponsible of this government to make a claim that tuition is going to be free and then backtrack from that claim when the reality is not that. It's irresponsible because people depend on these types of announcements. It might impact people who look forward to attending post-secondary education, thinking that it'll actually be

free, thinking that it'll actually not cost them anything because that might be a barrier for some people.

The fact is, this government claimed it was free and then backtracked and said, "Oh, well, it's not totally free." Now we have the Premier herself admitting that maybe that was the wrong language to use. It's absolutely irresponsible, because the reality is that paying \$3,000 a year up-front is not free when by Statistics Canada the tuition fees are close to \$8,000 and the amount that the government is talking about is closer to \$7,000, which is at least a \$1,000 gap. This government is making claims that they're simply not supporting. What they're actually doing is reorganizing the existing grants and pulling them together, which is good. If they would have announced that and said, "Hey, what we're going to do is reorganize existing grants and put them together," that would have been accurate, and that would have been the right, responsible thing to do.

What this government did is something very irresponsible, very hurtful, by making a claim that's not actually true. The government themselves have admitted that they made the mistake. That's irresponsible to do that. It sets a false hope and it's not what we want to see. What that does is that it results in more cynicism in politics. That's absolutely the wrong direction, and this government is to blame for doing that. It's absolutely unacceptable.

In addition, there is a particular problem that's been going on for a long time in the region of Peel, and this budget does not address that. There are a number of members from the Liberal Party who represent the region of Peel, and they know this is a major issue. There is an organization that talks about a fair share for Peel. The reality is that Peel has been underfunded chronically, and it's in all areas. Whether it's poverty reduction or whether it's issues around homelessness and housing affordability, this government has consistently underfunded the region of Peel, and it is something that's not addressed in this budget.

If we talk about health care: Health care is tremendously important. This budget is an additional cut to health care. It's going to be a cut to services, particularly in Peel region. We have in the city of Brampton, a city that's over 500,000 in population, only one hospital. There's been broken promise after broken promise by this government to ensure that there are two hospitals. The previous hospital that was initially promised not to be torn down was torn down. Then there was a promise to rebuild it, and it was not fulfilled. As it stands, there's no clear funding with respect to that hospital being built—again, a failure in this budget to address that serious concern around health care.

When it comes to the poverty reduction component, there are some troubling statistics in the Peel region—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I have to interrupt the member from Brampton–Gore–Malton. Pursuant to standing order 58(d), I'm now required to put the question.

Mr. Sousa has moved, seconded by Ms. Wynne, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of

the government. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I believe I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote will be required, deferred until after question period.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Since it is now almost 10:15, this House will stand recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1010 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to introduce Mr. Noa Mullin from Feversham in the great county of Grey. He's with the Beef Farmers of Ontario leadership group.

I would like to also introduce Ms. Meredith Closs from Shawville, Quebec, on behalf of Lisa Thompson, and Ms. Cindy Morrison from Lucknow, Bruce county, on behalf of Lisa Thompson.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure for me to welcome Dr. Brian Stevenson, the president of Lakehead University, as well as Dr. Angelique EagleWoman, who is the new dean of the school of law at Lakehead University. Please join me in welcoming them.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to welcome Amanda MacKenzie and Nikki Smith from the Ontario Dental Association today.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to introduce Jennifer Howe and William Loewith, the mother and brother, respectively, of the ADFW page, Madeline Loewith. I'm pleased to welcome them here today.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to welcome representatives from the Build leadership program: Rob Black, Joe Lennox from Kenilworth, Chloe Gresel from Erin and Barclay Nap from Puslinch.

Welcome to the Ontario Legislature today.

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a couple of guests visiting Queen's Park today: Lai Chu, Pat Sherman and Betty Wu-Lawrence. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very excited to welcome some guests from the Montessori Jewish Day School: Melissa Lalic; Leah Switzer, whose mother, Dana, I know very well; Jaeli Schnoor and Malka Toldstein.

As well, we have family and friends of the late Mr. Robert Frankford attending the tribute that we'll be doing shortly: Helen Breslauer, his widow; Rachael Frankford, his daughter; John Cummings, a friend; Tyrone Turner, a friend; Rona Abramovitch, a friend; Jonathan Freedman, a friend; Beatriz Milner, a friend; Cary Milner, also a friend; and David and Pat Warner, the former Speaker and spouse.

Hon. Mario Sergio: We have some 40 seniors from across the GTA joining us here today. I would like to introduce Elizabeth Macnab, the executive director of the

Ontario Society of Senior Citizens' Organizations; Kenny Dayal of the Trinidad and Tobago 50plus and Senior Association; Sandra Cardillo of the Loyola Arrupe centre for seniors; Donna from the Mississauga individual seniors' group; Valerie Steele from the Jamaican Canadian seniors' association; and Anita Kumar, also from the Ontario Society of Senior Citizens' Organizations.

Speaker, I'd like to welcome them all here at Queen's Park.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Mr. Joe Lennox and Mr. Jack Chaffe. They are here with Beef Farmers of Ontario.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I would like to welcome 35 seniors visiting the Legislature today from the Cantinho da Amizade, the Portuguese group from the Davenport Perth Neighbourhood and Community Health Centre in my riding of Davenport, accompanied by their coordinator, Maria Guimarães.

I want to extend a warm welcome to them here today at Queen's Park. Enjoy your visit. Bem-vindos.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature the father of page Maya Treitel, Natan Treitel. Welcome, Natan Treitel.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm thrilled that the page captain today is from Pickering-Scarborough East. Her parents are here. Her name is Christina Vadivelu. Her mother is Ramya and her father is Clement. They're here in the gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I'd like to welcome the family of page captain Joshua Kim, from Etobicoke-Lakeshore: his mother, Tina Chan-Kim; his father, David Kim; sister, Sarah Kim; brother, Alexander Kim; grandmother, Guat Ee Chan; and grandfather, Foo Kheong Chan. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to welcome to the chamber today, from my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, with the Build leadership program, Bruce Sawbridge, who is a beef farmer. He's also a 27-year veteran of the Ontario Provincial Police: Sergeant Bruce Sawbridge. Welcome to Queen's Park.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask all members to join me in welcoming this group of pages. Would they assemble for their introduction, please?

From Scarborough-Agincourt, Aarbi Krishnakumar; from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, Amelia Naidoo; from Welland, Ariel Wendling; from Willowdale, Barton Lu; from Halton, Chandise Nelson; from Pickering-Scarborough East, Christina Vadivelu; from Durham, Cooper Stone; from Burlington, Deanna Clark; from Scarborough Centre, Diluk Ramachandra; from Oakville, Harry Blackwell; from Scarborough Southwest, Jack Beverly; from Toronto-Danforth, Jierui Jiang; from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, Joshua Kim; from Huron-Bruce, Khushali Shah; from Don Valley East, Lauren Creasy; from Kitchener-Conestoga, MacFarlane Benham; from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale, Madeline Loewith; from

Eglinton-Lawrence, Maya Treitel; from Oak Ridges-Markham, Sabrina Arcuri; from Markham-Unionville, Samantha Su; from Mississauga South, Sohan Van de Mosselaer; from Mississauga-Brampton South, Terry Kuang; from Etobicoke Centre, Vanessa Russell; and from Parkdale-High Park, Zachary Gan. Welcome.

ATTACKS IN BRUSSELS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Deputy Premier on a point of order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find we have unanimous consent that we observe a moment of silence before question period and that staff of the Legislative Assembly be directed to fly flags at half-mast in honour of the victims of the terrorist attacks in Brussels today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

Would we all stand, please?

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We will see that staff ensures that the flag is flown at half-mast for the day.

WEARING OF PINS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General on a point of order.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear Franco-Ontarian pins in recognition of francophone week.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General is seeking unanimous consent to wear the Franco-Ontarian pins. Do we agree? Agreed.

1040

ROBERT FRANKFORD

Hon. James J. Bradley: A point of order: I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to Robert T.S. Frankford, former member for Scarborough East, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader seeks unanimous consent to pay tribute. Do we agree? Agreed.

Before we begin, I'd like the members to please join me in welcoming the family and friends of the late Robert T.S. Frankford, MPP for Scarborough East during the 35th Parliament, who are seated in the Speaker's gallery: his wife, Helen Breslauer; his daughters, Rachael Frankford and Elizabeth MacKay; and friends John Cummings, Tyrone Turner, Rona Abramovitch, Jonathan Freedman, Beatriz Milner and Cary Milner. Also, at their request, his late daughter, Emma, is here in spirit. Welcome, and thank you for being here.

Also in the Speaker's gallery are Mr. David Warner, MPP for Scarborough–Ellesmere during the 30th, 31st, 33rd and 35th Parliaments, and Speaker, and his wife, Pat; Mr. Steve Gilchrist, MPP for Scarborough East during the 36th and 37th Parliaments; Mr. Edward Fulton, MPP for Scarborough East during the 33rd and 34th Parliaments; Mr. Tony Rizzo, MPP for Oakwood during the 35th Parliament; and Mr. Dave Neumann, the member for Brantford. Thank you very much for being here, gentlemen.

It is now time for the tributes.

Ms. Soo Wong: Speaker, I rise today to recognize and remember Dr. Robert Timothy Stansfield Frankford, a physician, former member of provincial Parliament and community activist.

Bob was educated at the University of London, England, and trained at the St. George's Hospital Medical School. Bob emigrated to Canada in the late 1960s and settled in the city of Toronto. Bob was affectionately known as Dr. Bob.

As a practising physician, Dr. Bob advocated for the reform of the primary health care system in Ontario. He supported universal primary care registration, capitation payments for physicians, and requiring primary care physicians to work in a team environment with other health professionals. I think Dr. Bob would have supported our current minister's Patients First report.

When Bob started his health service organization in the 1980s, few physicians in Ontario were paid by capitation or worked in teams. Since 2005, there have been 184 family health teams in over 200 communities across Ontario. Currently, over three million Ontarians are enrolled in family health teams. If Bob had had his way, he would have registered all Ontarians in family health teams.

Throughout his life, whether as a physician or an activist, Bob was a visionary who felt a duty, an obligation and a mission in life to help those who would benefit from his help, to oppose injustice and to work for the common good. Dr. Bob was also well known in the community as a champion for access and equality for health needs in Ontario and for his belief in the Canada Health Act.

Besides advocating for the right to health care and access to health care, Dr. Bob was also concerned about racism, homelessness and inequality. He was known to read daily newspapers and, when he saw something he either strongly agreed or disagreed with, he would either write to the reporter or the columnist or send a letter to the editor.

Dr. Bob was generous with his time. He was a volunteer at a number of community groups, councils, boards and non-government agencies. I first met Bob in the late 1980s when he was elected and then served as co-chair of the community advisory board of the city of Toronto's board of health for the eastern area. I believe my colleague from Beaches–East York was also on the same board. He and I worked on a number of projects, including championing school breakfast programs and advocating for members of racial and ethnic minorities.

Bob had a long interest in the plight of foreign-trained health care professionals like physicians and nurses. He mentored many foreign-trained doctors seeking to practise their professions in Ontario. Dr. Bob also wrote many medical reports for refugee claimants referred by the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture.

From 1990 to 1995, Bob was elected to the Ontario Legislature, representing the Toronto riding of Scarborough East. He was a parliamentary assistant to two Ministers of Health, Evelyn Gigantes and Frances Lankin. This role framed much of Bob's advocacy work in the community before and after Queen's Park.

After leaving Queen's Park, Dr. Bob continued to work as a general practitioner in the east end of Toronto and as attending physician at Seaton House, the largest shelter for homeless men in North America.

He championed a number of health causes. Dr. Bob worked collaboratively with the Chinese Canadian Nurses Association of Ontario and co-founded the Healthy Inner City ESL Families, a community clinic offering services for the uninsured. This clinic was founded in 1999 in Alexandra Park and has been relocated to Scadding Court Community Centre in the riding of Trinity–Spadina.

As a firm believer in social justice, Dr. Bob also served on the board of directors of the Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre, a non-governmental agency in the east end of Toronto. He gave his time and energy in supporting the centre's work to achieve gender and racial equality and offer services ranging from skills development to support for women affected by domestic violence.

When this government created the 14 Local Health Integrated Networks across Ontario, Dr. Bob was the first chair of the Central East LHIN collaborative committee.

Since retiring from clinical work, Dr. Bob continued his social activist work. He focused his time and efforts on the Sickle Cell Association of Ontario, an initiative that he championed when he was an MPP. Sickle cell disease is a severe, hereditary form of anemia which affects primarily black and South Asian communities.

Dr. Bob served on the board of the Sickle Cell Association of Ontario. He advocated for universal newborn testing and genetic counselling aimed at stopping the spread of the disease. He was pleased when our current government implemented this action, leading to reduced death and disability.

I remember two occasions when I met Dr. Bob—at the Toronto District School Board and again here in Queen's Park—to talk about sickle cell anemia. As indicated earlier, Bob read somewhere in a newspaper about the TDSB launching the first type 1 diabetes management protocol in 2010. He contacted me, as I was the chair of the health committee, and requested a meeting to talk about sickle cell disease and how this disease affects many children's learning. I believe if I had remained at the TDSB I would have worked with Dr. Bob to create the first TDSB sickle cell management protocol, similar to that of type 1 diabetes.

When I was elected in 2011, Dr. Bob visited me here in Queen's Park, along with members of the Sickle Cell

Association of Ontario. In one of our last conversations, I told Bob that the Minister of Education is currently reviewing and consulting the health experts to improve the current protocol to address various chronic diseases like sickle cell anemia, diabetes and asthma.

He challenged our government, myself and the Minister of Education, to establish a comprehensive health strategy to improve the lives of all our students. Bob was involved with the Sick Cell Association right until the end of his life.

Dr. Bob was dedicated to Canada, Ontario, his community and his profession. He will always be remembered for his work in helping the less fortunate, fighting for justice and promoting equality.

Mr. Speaker, as I conclude my remarks, I want to thank Bob's family: his wife, Helen, and his daughters, Rachael and Elizabeth, as well as his five grandchildren, Malcolm, Lila, Sebastian, Olivia and Theo, for sharing Bob with all of us.

Thank you, Bob, for your contributions in making this world a better place for all of us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tributes?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Since I've been elected I've heard many tributes, and this is the first tribute that I have had the honour of giving.

One of the things that I think is so interesting for all of us is that we often didn't know the person personally. We may know the name of the person who we are giving the tribute for, but we certainly get to know them afterwards, and we're very honoured for this time that we can spend getting to know the former members of the House. I think it makes us all better for it.

Robert T. S. Frankford was born in Nottingham, England, the son of Margaret, an English Quaker mother, and Walter, a Viennese Jewish father. As the only member of the Jewish community on this side of the House I have to wonder why—it's just a coincidence. I wasn't aware of that, and it sort of sparked my interest in digging a little deeper.

1050

He did his medical training at the University of London in England and at St. George's Hospital Medical School. He immigrated to Canada in the late 1960s, settling in Toronto.

He was very proud of his heritage and just as proud of his legacy: his three very accomplished daughters, Rachael Frankford, Elizabeth MacKay, and the late Emma Frankford, who died too young to realize her full potential. He is also survived by five grandchildren: Malcolm, Lila, Sebastian, Olivia and Theo, and he was very proud of their great accomplishments, and wishes them much happiness, I'm sure. He will never be forgotten by his wife, Helen Breslauer, who is with us today.

He was a New Democrat member and served in a majority New Democrat government. He was responsible for inaugurating the first health service organization in Toronto. He served as parliamentary assistant from 1990 to 1991 and used his medical training to advocate on be-

half of health care issues, travel insurance, and specifically, as we just heard, the Sick Cell Association.

For Dr. Bob, as we know he was affectionately called, practising as a physician brought with it other responsibilities to his profession and to the reform of the primary health care system in Ontario. He was known for his advocacy of universal primary care registration, capitation payments for physicians, and working as a primary care doctor in a team together with other health care professionals. When he started his health service organization in the 1980s, very few physicians in Ontario were paid by capitation or worked in teams. As we heard, that has changed since then. Although the current arrangements were not yet to his satisfaction, it should be noted that many family doctors are now working in those teams. I think that the patients are the better for it.

Dr. Bob worked for his country, his province, his city, his community, his neighbourhood and his profession by volunteering his time to be a member of committees, councils, boards and other non-governmental organizations with missions focused on the good works in which he believed.

When he left the Ontario Legislature, he worked for three years as attending physician at Seaton House, and during and after that time he worked on behalf of the homeless in Toronto.

He had a special long-term interest in the plight of foreign-trained professionals, doctors and others, and he mentored foreign-trained doctors seeking to practise their professions in Ontario.

Since his days as an MPP, when he first encountered the Sick Cell Association of Ontario, he remained involved with them and attended a telephone conference meeting a little more than 48 hours before his death. I have reflections from the Sick Cell Association of Ontario, through Marie Boyd, whom I spoke with last week:

"Many years ago, Dr. Robert Frankford, affectionately known as Dr. Bob, became involved in the Sick Cell Association of Ontario, SCAO. It was while being at SCAO that Dr. Bob learned about sickle cell and saw how sickle cell patients were not being treated fairly. That was when he felt the need to advocate for the sickle cell population in the hope of changing people's attitudes.

"Dr. Bob was a board member and public policy committee chairperson and held that position until his passing. With Dr. Bob's commitment to SCAO we were able to achieve newborn screening in 2005. He enlightened fellow physicians here in Toronto to increase their knowledge by approaching the College of Physicians and Surgeons to have sickle cell disease included in their curriculum.

"He also mentored international student doctors on the importance of sickle cell and beta thalassemia disease. In Dr. Bob's efforts for sickle cell he was often accompanied in his advocacy work at Queen's Park to highlight the sickle cell plight."

I know they've had receptions here.

I'm just going to end by reading one of Dr. Bob's many online letters to the editor, and that's what's so fan-

tastic about the computer and the Internet. On September 21, 2014, in the *Toronto Star*, Dr. Bob wrote:

“WHO stats on Ebola contain reassurance that the disease is not universally fatal and there are hundreds of survivors. Sierra Leone has 1,361 cases and 509 deaths.

“This is an opportunity to research whether survivors share some common factor. It is known that carrying the sickle cell gene produces lower rates of malaria and related deaths. The sickle cell gene is carried by about 40% of West Africans.

“It would not be difficult to see if there is an increased incidence of so-called heterozygotes among survivors.

“Dr. Bob Frankford, Toronto.”

I just want to mention that sickle cell—it is interesting—if you’re a carrier, you don’t necessarily, obviously, have the disease, but it makes you somehow resistant to malaria. That was something I learned when I was back in university in optometry school.

I want to thank the family for joining us today. I want to thank the family and friends for sharing Dr. Bob with all of us. I want to just mention to the family that Dr. Bob and all of us doing the tributes here remind us of why we’re all here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tribute?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I’m honoured to rise on behalf of the Ontario NDP caucus to reflect on the life of Dr. Robert “Bob” Frankford, who passed away on August 1 last year.

Last September, I was honoured to join with his family, friends and community at a memorial service to remember and celebrate his life and his work—his great contributions to making his community and our province a better place. He’s remembered by those who served with him for his soft-spoken nature, but particularly remembered for his intelligence, his thoughtful insight and for his willingness to reach out to people all across this Legislature to talk about how they were solving the problems that they and their constituents were facing.

As the NDP member for Scarborough East, he served his constituency and his constituents with modesty, pride and the force of his convictions. Whether it was the expansion of a seniors’ care home or organizing physicians to provide health care to new Canadians, he worked tirelessly to make the world a better place for all, no matter what their circumstances. His priority was always first and foremost the people of Scarborough and making sure that his work made life a little better for the people in his community.

A general practitioner by trade, his passion was health. Those who knew him speak highly of his intelligence, his pragmatic determination to improve the delivery of health care in this province and his willingness to explore out-of-the-box solutions to meet that end. He was a champion for accessible public health care, for the expansion of pharmacare for all and for social justice.

Dr. Bob practised his beliefs and never stopped serving his community and his province. After leaving the Legislature, he resumed practising medicine so that he could assist those who were struggling on the margins

of our society. This included taking a number of locums in northern Ontario to help address the shortage of doctors in northern communities. He’s fondly remembered for the many years he dedicated to Seaton House, the Ontario Medical Association and the Sickle Cell Association of Ontario, where he fought for the best possible care for sickle cell patients and their families. Dr. Robert Frankford is a proud example of someone who dedicated his life to the service of others, and he will be warmly remembered by everyone who knew him.

I had an opportunity to know Bob. I enjoyed his company. To those of you who sit here—Ms. Wong, you spoke about this—Bob didn’t stop talking to politicians to get them to do the right thing. He was, in a very gentle and determined way, relentless. For that, all of us who worked with him, knew him and talked to him will remember him.

He was one of the good guys. I was very sad to hear of his passing, and I know that his family and friends assembled here feel the same way. To his family and friends, on behalf of Ontario’s New Democrats, our most sincere condolences.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their thoughtful and heartfelt comments. To the family, we offer our collective condolences. As well, we will make sure that this is available to you as a DVD and copies of Hansard for you to have as a token of our affection for Dr. Bob. Thank you very much for being here. Again, I thank the members for their heartfelt comments.

ORAL QUESTIONS

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. It was very clear yesterday from the non-answers we heard from the government that neither the health minister nor the Premier had any idea what was happening at Ornge Air. We in the PC caucus didn’t learn about Ornge’s plan to lease a helicopter from AgustaWestland through a freedom-of-information request. We didn’t learn about it from a whistle-blower. We learned about it just through a search, through a public website on the Internet.

1100

Can the Premier explain how neither she nor the health minister, the very people responsible for oversight of Ornge, had any idea that Ornge was planning to do business with the very same company being investigated by the OPP?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care will want to speak to the details. The Leader of the Opposition received a letter before the end of question period yesterday outlining what was happening. Obviously, as I said yesterday, Ornge is well into a new chapter. The governance has been

changed. Ornge has been working both with communities who are supportive of the measure to lease an AW139 aircraft to replace the SK676 helicopters at its Moosonee base.

But, Mr. Speaker, what's really important is that, despite what the member opposite is inferring, this RFI is still open. It continues to be open for companies until March 29. In fact, there have been no decisions made, despite what the Leader of the Opposition implies.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That will do. I will deal with anyone who decides that that's funny.

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: At the end of question period yesterday, the health minister gave me a copy of a letter from his assistant deputy minister about Ornge, dated February 10 of this year, advising the minister that it planned to lease a helicopter from Agusta-Westland. So it's pretty obvious that the letter was only brought to the minister's attention after I asked the question here in the Legislature about Ornge's shady business deal.

Mr. Speaker, isn't the Premier concerned that neither she or the health minister knew anything about Ornge's sole-sourced deal with AgustaWestland? Where is the oversight that this government promised? Or is this business as usual under the government of Kathleen Wynne?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, with these wild accusations, Mr. Speaker, I think we're finally beginning to see the true colours of the Leader of the Opposition, and the smear campaign that he's trying to introduce here.

Here is the truth, and what a difference a day makes: As the Premier mentioned, there are two Sikorsky helicopters in Moosonee that are reaching end of service. A decision was made, after consultation, by Ornge to replace those Sikorskys with a leased AgustaWestland helicopter, so that we would have a single fleet across the province, because there were challenges to getting pilots who were also trained on the Sikorskys. Having a single fleet makes absolute sense.

So an RFI, a request for information, was introduced in February. Despite what the member is inferring, the RFI continues to be open until the end of the month. In fact, I understand that several companies have expressed interest on the lease. Should there be an indication that a company or companies—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'll continue in the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: When a serious public policy question is asked, the government chooses to attack. The Auditor General completed his 2012 report into Ornge Air and said the scandal was a textbook example of what happens when a ministry fails

to properly oversee a government agency. The public accounts committee report said the ministry missed a number of red flags. You should have been alerted to bad things that were happening at Ornge.

Getting a letter from Ornge announcing that they're sole-sourcing a contract from the very same company under a criminal investigation by the OPP should have raised one gigantic Liberal red flag. Mr. Speaker, can the Premier explain, after seeing this letter, why they didn't cancel the shady contract?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: First of all, there is no contract. As I was mentioning, should a company or companies express interest between now and the end of the month, it will move forward to a request for proposals. In the event of a request for proposals, an RFP, a fairness commissioner will oversee the process to ensure fairness and transparency. I would hope this would make it abundantly clear to the opposition just how important and how proper this process is.

I know the member is concerned about the relationship with AgustaWestland, and AgustaWestland is co-operating fully with the OPP on the investigation. However, Ornge currently has a relationship with Agusta for maintenance of their helicopters and for replacement of parts; they need to get them from the parent company. So the Leader of the Opposition is suggesting either buying an entirely new fleet—if he doesn't want Ornge to have a relationship with AgustaWestland for maintenance of the current helicopters—or he's talking about danger to the pilots who have to fly these if we're unable to service them properly.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, the CEO of Ornge kept up his end of the bargain. He sent a letter to the health minister and told him that Ornge was getting back into bed with AgustaWestland. He waved that big red flag. The failure here is with the minister and the Premier.

Yesterday, when I asked the Premier about Ornge's shady deal with AgustaWestland, she responded, "I do not know the nature of this particular decision." Can the Premier explain why she knew nothing about such a controversial deal? Can the Premier tell us why she isn't doing her job to protect patients and taxpayers in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I find this unbelievable. I would suggest that the leader of the party just understand that there is no way he is going to win this argument. When you look at the facts behind this, the wild allegations that he made yesterday and that he continues to make today—he's besmirching the reputation of Ornge, including great

individuals like Ian Delaney, like Charles Harnick, the former Attorney General of this province and a member of the Progressive Conservative Party. I can't believe that he continues.

But to suggest, as the member opposite seems to be suggesting, that we cut off all business ties with AgustaWestland, that would require the purchasing of an entirely new fleet. Or, alternatively, it would require putting our first responders and our patients—18,000 patients a year—at risk by not properly servicing these aircraft.

We don't have a contract before the lease ends with AgustaWestland. We have an RFI that may lead to an RFP, and a number of companies have expressed interest.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: What the government did—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's it. I'm going to go to the individual. I asked you to try to keep it calm; you're not. I'm going to deal with the individuals, even if you chirp something quick.

Finish, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, we've obviously touched a nerve. The government got caught, and they got caught with the exposure of an advance contract award notice. That is what we found and that is what we're trying to expose.

I do not understand why the government is doing business with a company under a criminal investigation here in the province of Ontario. But it gets worse. This same company, AgustaWestland, the same company that wined and dined disgraced Ornge CEO Chris Mazza, got charged in October 2014 by the Indian government for shady deals. And actually, more recently, Sweden's anti-corruption authorities launched an inquiry into the sole-source purchase of AgustaWestland helicopters.

There are criminal investigations into this company across the world, and this government is doing business with it. Why are you doing business—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Now we know why Harper didn't give you any jobs.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. I'm trying to get in, and I'll deal with it, but you're not helping me.

The Minister of Energy will withdraw.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Health.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the member opposite is expressing concerns about a company that is fully co-operating with an OPP investigation—an investigation that centres on the previous administration, a number of years ago, at Ornge.

However, as I mentioned, and what the member opposite seems to be implying, I'm not prepared to abandon

an entire fleet. We have to maintain a relationship with the parent company, with AgustaWestland, for spare parts, for things like the gearbox of a helicopter. What the member is suggesting is cutting off all ties with AgustaWestland, which is completely inappropriate and impractical, because either we stop servicing these aircraft, putting patients and pilots at risk, or we would have to spend millions and millions of dollars and purchase an entirely new fleet. That's completely inappropriate.

What is happening is that Ornge is co-operating with the OPP, the ministry is co-operating with the OPP and AgustaWestland is co-operating with the OPP, and that will continue.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: I'm hoping, rather than spin, we can get a serious answer to a serious question.

This is a company that's being investigated worldwide—in Sweden, in Cyprus, in India—for trying to influence governments, for shady deals. For some reason, the Liberal government here in Ontario chooses to do business with them again, despite the fact that the Auditor General said that we don't need additional helicopters.

If you do not want to answer on the question of protecting taxpayer dollars, how about we talk about patients, about the health concerns associated with these helicopters? The report from the Auditor General said that there's not enough room to perform CPR. There's not enough room to lift patients' heads, forcing paramedics to insert a breathing tube. A July 2013 coroner's report said that operational issues with these helicopters contributed to the deaths of eight patients.

So my question for the Premier—and please don't pass the buck. It's not right for patients; it's not right for taxpayers. Why are they doing business with a company that's being criminally investigated?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, I'll repeat that we have two aging Sikorsky helicopters in Moosonee that are nearing the end of their serviceable period. They need to be replaced. They're going to be replaced with what's most appropriate, another AgustaWestland, which will turn our fleet from having two different types of helicopters into a single fleet. It's much better for pilots. They support this. We don't have to be concerned about having pilots specifically trained for the Sikorsky and the challenges of getting pilots on staff at Moosonee for that reason. It's better for reliability as well.

We have an RFI which is open until the end of the month. There are a number of companies, including AgustaWestland's parent company, which has expressed interest in holding that lease. If there is a company or a number of companies that move forward with that RFI,

we'll move to an RFP. We'll have a fairness commissioner who will oversee that entire process. It will be consistent with the broader public sector procurement directive.

This is as open and transparent as it gets. The member opposite wants to actually dismantle the fleet, buy an entire new fleet and put patients and pilots at risk.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. Did the Premier or her staff sign off on the budget before it was sent to the translators?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to answer the question, but I just want to acknowledge what I think people are seeing on their social media, that Rob Ford has died. I just want to express the sadness of this Legislature. We'll have a moment of silence at the end. I believe we're going to ask for a moment of silence at the end.

In terms of the budget, I just want to make sure that the member opposite understands that we listen to people from around the province constantly. I travel the province. I hear from people year-round. The issues and the concerns that I hear and that we hear are reflected in the decisions that we make and are reflected in our budget.

On the specifics in terms of the timing, there were a number of groups, for example, who appeared before the committee, and their ideas are reflected in the budget. I will come back to those in the supplementary, but there was a lot of information that flowed well after the translation had already begun.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Just before I ask my question, I also want to acknowledge, on behalf of New Democrats, the sadness in the loss and the death of Mr. Ford. It's a tragic loss. I just want to acknowledge that as well.

Mr. Speaker, the budget was written and sent for translation on January 27. That was before pre-budget consultations heard from the following: the Ontario Health Coalition; the Canadian Federation of Students; the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care; the Ontario Federation of Agriculture; the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, the Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario and ONA; OPSEU; the Toronto district labour council; the Ontario Hospital Association; craft brewers and winemakers; the Chiefs of Ontario; and Fix Our Schools.

Can the Premier explain why she went ahead with the budget before hearing from these Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, it's completely false and untrue, what the member has just said. We had done all the consultations. All that was achieved. We did over 20 of them.

Translations of portions of the budget are done continuously. The one that mattered most is what happened on Saturday, February 20, the day that I sat in my office here in Toronto, reviewing the budget, making amend-

ments to it still. That translation was what mattered. That was the final product. That's what went to print and was produced here in the House on the 25th of February.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The Premier loves to talk about consultations and conversations, but that means listening as well as talking. But while people were presenting, the Liberal government had already written the budget, finalized it and sent it for translation.

Will the Premier apologize to Ontarians for treating their consultations as a PR exercise?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The work that SCOFEA does, the work that all of us in this House do to consult with our constituents, to enable us to populate the budget document with priorities and responsibilities of the people of the province, is critical.

I sat on SCOFEA for many years. I recognize all too well why we should do it and need to do it. It is why I appeared before SCOFEA on the final submissions of consultations. I had the opportunity to express what the government wanted to do, and to hear from both the NDP, the Liberals and the PCs on their reflections of those consultations.

The very people the member opposite just cited are included in this budget, are cited in this budget. In fact, I can relate some of the very issues: \$3 million for Bio-industrial Innovation Canada, in Hamilton, on page 10; \$1 million to the issue of pregnancy and infant loss, on page 115—that happened after those consultations—and \$17 million to the Toronto Atmospheric Fund, on page 30.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The next question is again to the Premier. The Premier says she is a partner in the federal government. Does that mean the federal budget will ensure that Ontario will receive enough infrastructure funding so that the Premier can finally agree to stop the sale of Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I have no idea what is in the federal budget. We will all have to wait until this afternoon.

Now that we actually have a federal government that understands that investing in infrastructure and working with provinces is important, that having a price on carbon is important—now that we have a federal government that is willing to work in partnership with the provincial governments across the country—I'm hopeful that we will see those things reflected in the budget. I'm very optimistic about that.

But I don't know the specifics of the budget. We'll have to wait until this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: In the fall of 2014, Liberal MPPs supported a motion calling for national, universal and affordable child care. Unfortunately, there was nothing in

this Ontario budget for child care. Liberal MPPs made a promise here in the Legislature to partner with the federal government so that mothers and fathers can get the child care they can afford, and families would stop seeing cuts to child care across this province.

Given that there was nothing in the Ontario budget for child care, has the Premier received any assurances from the federal government that they will pick up where the provincial budget failed and actually support affordable child care in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I don't have information about what is in the federal budget. I know that we have a federal government now that, unlike the previous federal government, actually shares a value system with our government, and that understands it's important to work with provincial governments and that it's important to invest in people and their talent and their skills and in infrastructure, and is willing to have those discussions that the previous government wasn't willing to have. But I have no information about the specifics that are in the budget this afternoon.

What I do know is that we have been working to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in child care. We have worked with the child care sector. We're modernizing the child care sector so that we can assure safety and security for children who are in child care across the province. We'll continue to do that, but we'll have to wait for the federal budget this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: For years, the Liberals insisted that all their problems came from Ottawa. Now they talk about the strength of their federal partnership. Does that mean that after this federal budget, they will stop closing demonstration schools, they will stop closing hospital beds, they will stop firing nurses, and finally stop the sale of Hydro One?

1120

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have made investments in this province. The member opposite talks about the infrastructure investments—well, he doesn't talk about the infrastructure investments. He talks about Hydro One, but he doesn't support infrastructure investments. His party somehow, out of whole cloth—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Magic.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —magical thinking, would create the opportunity to build infrastructure. There is absolutely no evidence that they have any idea how they would do that.

We actually have a plan that we're implementing. That plan is part of our budget. I hope, given what the member opposite has said, that maybe he's looking at our budget once again and is considering supporting parts of our budget.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Speaker, allow me to just have a quick moment. On behalf of the Ontario PCs, we would

again like to express our sincere condolences to the Ford family on the passing of Rob Ford early this morning.

My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Twenty-one dogs were seized from a dogfighting ring in my riding. They've been locked up in cages for over five months, while their alleged abusers remain free on bail. I've requested the OSPCA to allow me to see the dogs, just to see how well they're doing, but to date, they have not returned my call.

The animal sanctuary Dog Tales Rescue has offered to take them in immediately, as an interim measure, at no cost to the province, but they need the minister's help. They require his approval.

I understand the minister has a rescue dog just like me and will be visiting Dog Tales. The province can either pay to have these dogs killed or take action and save them at no cost. Only the minister has the power to save these dogs. To the minister: Is the minister willing to provide special designation—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. When I stand, you sit. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much again, Speaker. I want to thank the member opposite for asking this question. I very much appreciate his sincere passion on this issue.

I think all of us in this House have an affinity towards protecting the most vulnerable, the pets in our communities, who, in many respects, are voiceless. But as I have stated before in the House, what the member is asking is about a court process, which is under way, involving the OSPCA.

We do understand that this is a very challenging issue, and many individuals and organizations are concerned. But as the member knows, there is currently an application to the court by the OSPCA for permission to euthanize 21 of the 31 pit bull dogs seized from an alleged dogfighting operation, citing risks to public safety. However, the remaining dogs are being rehabilitated for relocation outside of the province. It's up to the courts to decide as to the next steps.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Back to the minister: This government just doesn't get it. In his responses to questions on this issue, the minister claims he can't do anything. This is unacceptable.

Minister, you do have the authority. The Dog Owners' Liability Act permits these dogs to be given to a designated body. This could be done without a formal regulation. In other words, your ministry's approval is all that's required.

If either one of us were told that our dogs were sick and they had to be put down, I'm sure that we would seek a second opinion. We'd fight to save their lives. These dogs cannot speak for themselves, so I will be their voice. The next court hearing is April 18, and I'm asking you, Minister: Don't leave these dogs in cages for another month.

Speaker, to the minister: Will you move quickly and grant a special designation to Dog Tales Rescue to give these suffering dogs a second chance at life?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, contrary to the member's assertion and public reports, the government of Ontario does not currently have legislative or regulatory authority to direct the OSPCA to take or not take any action, or to exempt a private facility from the requirements of the Dog Owners' Liability Act for the purposes of transferring ownership of the dogs to such a facility.

The OSPCA is an independent charitable organization that provides a number of services such as animal shelters, veterinary and spay-neuter clinics and public education about animal welfare. Additionally, the OSPCA Act authorizes SPCA inspectors and agents to enforce any law pertaining to the welfare of animals. Police may also enforce these laws.

There's a reason that these decisions are being made by the experts who have the capacity under the legislation to make those determinations. It's not up to this Legislature or to the government to intervene.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday we learned that the president of the Union Pearson Express, Kathy Haley, is being fired. Her crime: She did what the Premier ordered her to do.

We need a history lesson here. Six years ago, the Premier, who was then the Minister of Transportation, ordered Metrolinx to take over the UP Express after the private partner dropped out of the project because they knew it wouldn't make any money. Even so, the Premier ordered Metrolinx to implement the same flawed business model. Kathy Haley was hired a year after the Premier made this decision.

Why is the Premier not taking any responsibility for her own bad decision?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I appreciate the member's question. I'm not going to comment on personnel matters specifically to Metrolinx or on any other personnel matters.

I know that questions similar to this one came up yesterday regarding the Union Pearson Express. What I said yesterday stands: I've had the opportunity to speak with board chair Rob Prichard. I've had the opportunity to work with the board chair, board members and senior staff at Metrolinx for close to two years now. What we are focused on on this side of the House, working closely with Metrolinx, is to make sure that we can deliver on the transit progress that the people of the greater Toronto and Hamilton area expect. That's the mandate that they gave this Premier. That's the mandate that this Premier has

given me. I look forward to continuing to work with Metrolinx to make sure that we deliver on our commitments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Again back to the Premier: The original private partner knew that the UP Express could not make money as the exclusive boutique express service for the executive class travellers demanded by this Liberal government. When the private partner dropped out in 2010, the Premier, who was then the Minister of Transportation, could have fixed this problem. She could have changed the UP Express into a true public transit service with affordable fares, more stations and more public access. She could have electrified it from the start. This is what the public has always demanded and wanted. Instead, she forced Metrolinx to build what her government wanted.

Why must Kathy Haley take the blame for the Premier and this Liberal government's bad decision?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: One thing I think is important to note: Just a couple of days ago, or a few days ago, we announced, in time for the March break, that we were making the fares for the Union Pearson Express more affordable for people who are visiting this region and for people who live in this region. Preliminary numbers and analysis show that since we have made that change to the fares, ridership has dramatically increased, which I think is good news.

In the first half of her question, the member from Parkdale-High Park referenced a history lesson. I think it's most important for people watching, people here in this chamber and watching at home, to remember that over the last couple of years, at least, as this Premier and our government have put forward plans to build the province up through budgets and other initiatives, the NDP in this chamber has consistently voted against and resisted every opportunity to support the transit investments that they claim they so desperately want. It's unfortunate—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M. Grant Crack: Ma question est pour la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones.

Dimanche—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thought I gave him a chance, but the member from Essex will come to order.

Carry on, please.

M. Grant Crack: Encore, monsieur le Président, ma question est pour la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones.

Dimanche dernier, le 20 mars, tous les francophones de l'Ontario et à travers le Canada, ainsi que dans les pays francophones du monde entier, ont célébré la Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

1130

Rappelons-nous qu'en Ontario nous comptons plus de 600 000 francophones, soit 5 % de la population dans la province, la plus large communauté francophone hors Québec. Aujourd'hui, les Franco-Ontariens peuvent vivre en français grâce à l'accès à l'éducation en français, aux services de santé, mais également grâce aux services multidisciplinaires offerts par les organismes communautaires et culturels francophones.

Monsieur le Président, est-ce que la ministre peut nous expliquer ce que le gouvernement fait pour soutenir la communauté francophone?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merci au député de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell pour sa question. Je sais qu'il appuie beaucoup la francophonie et représente beaucoup de francophones.

Alors, j'en profite pour souhaiter à tous les francophones et les francophiles de l'Ontario une belle Semaine de la Francophonie. En cette semaine spéciale, nous pouvons nous réjouir des efforts que le gouvernement a faits pour améliorer les services en français.

Depuis 2003, ce gouvernement a fait beaucoup par l'entremise de différentes initiatives pour améliorer les services en français. On peut penser à la création du Commissariat aux services en français. On peut penser à l'établissement d'une cible de 5 % pour l'immigration francophone. On peut penser à l'adoption de la Loi sur le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes. On peut penser aussi à l'ouverture de nombreuses écoles—plus de 90 écoles—en français en Ontario, et, en terminant, au plan d'action en matière d'éducation postsecondaire en langue française dans le sud-ouest de l'Ontario.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Une question?

M. Grant Crack: Je remercie la ministre pour sa réponse.

La diversité est un élément clé dans notre province. En effet, 10 % des francophones de la province sont issus des minorités visibles. Dans le budget de 2016, une nouvelle catégorie a été créée pour attirer les travailleurs qualifiés francophones qui souhaitent venir vivre en Ontario.

Monsieur le Président, je souhaiterais que la ministre nous en dise plus sur les différents programmes qui soutiennent la communauté francophone.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merci encore une fois au député de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Le député a bien raison. L'Ontario est la première juridiction à lancer un volet francophone pour le Programme ontarien des candidats à l'immigration—et oui, c'est une première.

Pour ce qui est des autres programmes qui permettent d'améliorer l'accès aux services en français, nous pouvons compter sur le projet pilote, par exemple, sur les services en français dans le palais de justice d'Ottawa, un projet qui permet de renforcer l'accès à la justice en français.

On peut penser à l'investissement dans le système d'éducation qui permet aux étudiants d'avoir des cours en français, du jardin d'enfants à la 12^e année, et offre

également des cours en français dans six universités et trois collèges à travers la province.

Pour terminer, le gouvernement soutient les divers organismes francophones de la province. Ces organismes jouent un rôle essentiel dans plusieurs domaines dont la santé, l'emploi, l'immigration et la culture.

Je suis très fière des progrès qui ont été faits ici en Ontario et qui contribuent à l'épanouissement de la communauté francophone. Merci, monsieur le Président.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I'd like to read a quote from the minister: We aim to "make it easier for patients to find a doctor." And from his mandate letter: "Ensure that every Ontarian ... has a primary care provider."

This Liberal government has been in power for 13 years, and yet my riding has two high-physician-needs communities: Owen Sound and South Bruce Peninsula. The reality that the residents of my communities remain in high physician need and that my constituents have not had access to family doctors is simply inexcusable.

Minister, why is your government denying this primary health service to families in my riding?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. It is a very important issue, that we continue to increase the availability of physicians and other health care providers—our nurse practitioners, for example, who form part of our primary health care teams—and we make sure that we're increasing access to them. Currently, 94% of Ontarians have such access, which does demonstrate not only how far we've come, a significant improvement since a decade ago—in fact, it's one of the highest in the country.

But there is more work to be done, and that's part of the reason why I released in December a discussion paper that calls for further reforms to our primary care systems, specifically for that reason: so we can go that extra mile, that extra distance for that additional 6% who do want a health care provider but are unable to find them.

The member opposite alluded to the fact that much of his riding is designated high-needs. I'm happy to talk in the supplementary about the benefits of that as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Back to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: Minister, your government has been in charge for 13 years, yet 300 communities remain underserved. This is a deplorable and indefensible record. We're talking about the very important work of putting doctors in areas of high needs.

What's worse, the minister has recently cut off South Bruce Peninsula from the high-needs program, denying local families access to doctors. The minister has cut off a community in need, one with a significant burden of poverty; a high proportion of vulnerable, frail seniors; an at-risk First Nation population; and a community identified by your own—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Well, that's not helpful at all, when you're the one who is complaining that I'm not standing.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We've got you on tape. And I don't consider that a challenge to the Chair.

Finish your question, please.

Mr. Bill Walker:—an at-risk First Nation population and a community identified by your own ministry as underserved.

This isn't the time to make excuses and talk platitudes. Access to a family physician is not a stretch goal. This is not an extra mile. Given the evidence, the families in South Bruce Peninsula expect your Liberal government to reinstate their high-needs designation. Minister, will you do that today?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The high-needs designation is an extremely important designation. For example, it gives access to physicians in a family health team model.

In fact, two of his colleagues, the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock and the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex, will agree with me that just recently in the past days, both of their significant portions—in the case of Chatham-Kent-Essex, his entire riding—has now been designated high-needs. Same with the member from the Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. What I would ask the member opposite, as his two colleagues have done, is work with me if he's got concerns about designation or if he's got concerns about access to doctors.

But it's rich coming from this party, who fired 9,000 nurses, who closed 28 hospitals, who so disrespected physicians that they were fleeing the province. We can't take lessons from the history that they provide us. What we're doing is we're continuing to provide that access. I hope the member opposite would work with me to provide access to his riding.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Two weeks ago, I called on the minister to intervene in the OSPCA's application to put down 21 dogs rescued from a dogfighting ring in Tilbury and to spare their lives. Two weeks later, and the courts have denied the application of the dog rescue to rehabilitate these animals. Their lives remain in the minister's hands.

These dogs should be going to a rescue organization, and the only barrier is the OSPCA court application and the breed-specific legislation that bans them. Will the minister commit to saving these dogs and end the breed-specific ban in Ontario?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: This question was already asked—an identical question—and my answer really does not change as well. Contrary to the member's assertion, contrary to the public reports, the government does not currently have legislative or regulatory authority to direct the OSPCA to take or not to take any action, or to exempt a private facility from the requirements of the Dog Own-

ers' Liability Act for the purposes of transferring ownership of the dogs to such a facility.

The OSPCA, as we know, is an independent charitable organization that provides a number of services. A lot of those services come as a result of the OSPCA Act that has been passed by this Legislature. Part of that legislative requirement is for the SPCA inspectors and agents to enforce any law pertaining to the welfare of animals. Of course, police could also enforce those laws.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Just to be clear, this wasn't a repeat of the same question. We are asking for an end to the breed-specific ban.

The minister claims that there is nothing he can do, but he is the minister responsible for the administration of the OSPCA Act that governs the group seeking to euthanize these dogs, so he does have a say. The breed-specific ban is a provincial ban, and this government is choosing to continue on with this discriminatory legislation.

Speaker, I will ask again, just to be clear: Will the minister end the breed-specific ban and allow animal welfare agencies the chance to rehabilitate these 21 dogs instead of condemning them to die?

1140

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you again to the member for the question. Again, that particular piece of legislation has been put in place by this Legislature to ensure public safety and security. We have heard of many instances where a particular breed of dogs has resulted in serious injuries to children in particular, and that is something, of course, we all take very seriously.

In this particular instance, as we know, there is currently an application to the court by the OSPCA for permission to euthanize 21 of the 31 pit bull dogs seized from an alleged dogfighting operation, citing risks to public safety. That is the key, Speaker. One of the reasons why the OSPCA is seeking this application is because they feel that 21 of those dogs pose a serious risk to public safety. The other dogs have been rehabilitated, but in this particular instance, a determination has been made.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, and it's not about the OSPCA—let's be clear.

Minister, yesterday you hosted a consultation for your new Strategy for a Safer Ontario in my community of Cobourg—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not helpful either, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Finish, please.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Minister, yesterday you hosted a consultation for your new Strategy for a Safer Ontario in my community of Cobourg. There, we heard passionate ideas from a number of our local community members

about how to modernize policing across our province for the 21st century. Many of my community members provided feedback on how policing can be modernized in the 21st century to better serve Ontarians.

But Ontarians across the province, and those with us in this Legislature today, need to have a further understanding of what these consultations and the Strategy for a Safer Ontario are all about.

Speaker, through you, to the minister: Please explain the purpose of these consultations.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to first thank the member from Northumberland–Quinte West for his hospitality yesterday, when I was in his community of Cobourg. We had a very fruitful day in terms of visiting Rebound Child and Youth Services and seeing the incredible work they do in helping at-risk youth in Northumberland county. It was encouraging to see the work that they're doing.

In addition, we had the opportunity to meet with the chiefs of police from Cobourg and Port Hope, and the OPP detachment commander and members of the police services board about the excellent work they're doing in Northumberland county in keeping the community safe.

We ended the day with a consultation on the Strategy for a Safer Ontario at the Cobourg Community Centre. Speaker, there was an incredible turnout. In fact, the room was smaller than we had hoped for, and we had to bring in more chairs and tables. It was great to see the active participation of the community in how we can build a safer Ontario. In my supplementary, I'll speak to some of those findings.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you, Minister. I'm pleased to hear that you are consulting so broadly on this new strategy, with a clear focus on evidence-based outcomes. After all, as many of us here today already know, while our police officers work hard every day to keep our communities safe, the current model of community safety is no longer sustainable. We need a made-in-Ontario approach to community safety that focuses on addressing the problems in our communities, not just from an enforcement perspective but, rather, through a more co-ordinated effort from multiple different types of services. That way, communities will be able to respond to crime and social issues in a more lasting and cost-effective fashion.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister please explain how the Strategy for a Safer Ontario will improve community safety outcomes across the province?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: This is a very exciting time in the history of policing in Ontario as we are looking at ways to modernize and build 21st-century policing in the province of Ontario. In fact, Speaker, this is an opportunity for our province to be a leader in Canada and in North America.

The consultations are exactly about that. We want to hear from communities as to how we ensure we move away from a reactive, enforcement-based model of policing to one that is more proactive and community-focused. How can we ensure that local communities are

able to develop community safety and well-being plans? How can we better utilize community safety hubs to ensure that our communities are safe? What kinds of roles and functions does a 21st-century police officer play, and how can we ensure that we're providing the right response, at the right time, by the right personnel?

These are the kinds of questions we're asking members of the public. We ask them to join our consultations or go online at ontario.ca/safercommunities for our public consultation document.

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. As you know, there's a proposal for a landfill in my riding. I know the minister has received thousands and thousands of letters, postcards and emails from my constituents who are concerned about the impact on their drinking water. The mayor of Ingersoll has been very vocal about the fact that our community does not want to take another municipality's garbage, both by going to these municipalities and in speaking to the government at ROMA.

To make it clear, we are not a willing host. At ROMA, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Agriculture stated that a municipality would not be forced to take the garbage if they are not a willing host. Can the minister confirm that this government will not force our community to take another municipality's garbage?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I just want to be very clear about where we are in the process right now, because there's a legal process to ensure we protect the rights of communities, but we also have a fair process for siting landfills. I think we'd all appreciate that it's not a matter of taking other people's garbage. We have a system in Ontario where we share those burdens of disposal.

What has been approved are terms of reference that the proponent in this case has to follow. As we go through this process, all aspects are looked at. Detailed studies are done on risks to water supplies—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Blah, blah, blah. Will you, or will you not?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: So it's an evidence-based, public, transparent process.

I wrote into the amendment for the terms of reference that we have to consider cumulative effects. I think there was some confusion there, because that actually includes human health effects. I just want it to be very clear on the record: We don't actually have a health category, but that's included in cumulative—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. As you know, the people in my community are worried, not just about where the garbage could come

from but the risk to our drinking water from a landfill located on fractured bedrock near the Thames River and one of Ingersoll's main municipal water supplies. They're concerned that this government doesn't get it.

Today is World Water Day, and to mark this occasion, the people of my riding are looking for a commitment from the Minister of the Environment. Can the minister give us his assurance that the landfill will not be approved if it puts our drinking water at risk?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The short answer is yes, and that's what the terms-of-reference policy is.

While I have great respect for the member from Oxford—he's been a friend and I think we have worked well together on these issues, and I know he and I share a concern. I would even go further, Mr. Speaker: I would say that Oxford county is one of the leading counties, if not the leading county in Ontario, on environmental sustainability, zero waste and low carbon. This is a remarkable community with a remarkable environmental group. So we are very concerned, because there are not that many communities—each of us as MPPs would not put in our election literature that we're running for re-election by putting a waste facility in our communities. It is one of the more difficult decisions. So we want to make sure that the standards are some of the highest.

I commit to work with your community, with your mayor and with yourself to ensure that if the decision, in the end, is to site a dump there, it meets every single standard. I think we've put in place, with cumulative effects, the highest standard possible.

1150

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Minister of Education. Children and families across the province continue to inundate my office expressing concerns that provincial and demonstration schools may be forced to close. Students who have had positive, life-changing experiences are coming forward and sharing their stories. Parents have seen their children grow, thrive and succeed. Experts in the sector have spoken publicly about the value of these schools. Even pediatricians are coming forward.

These schools help our most vulnerable kids. Some children, particularly those who thrive in ASL or QSL environments, will be left with no other local alternatives.

My question is clear: Will the Minister of Education ensure that no provincial or demonstration school is closed as a result of consultation, yes or no?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Of course, as we've said many times, no decisions have been made. The consultation is continuing.

We really do need to think about how we best serve our children with special needs. We know that the children who are in the demonstration schools are served very well by the demonstration schools. Nobody is arguing that. They have very good programs. But what we are

looking at is the availability of those programs, the accessibility of those programs, and we are reviewing the demonstration schools.

I want to assure people that that review will happen as quickly as possible. But we do want to hear from everyone involved, and no decisions have been made at this point.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: These are critical programs for students who go into the provincial and demonstration schools, as the minister herself has acknowledged. Perhaps she should lift the caps on enrolment and reopen enrolment, rather than keeping it closed.

Speaker, it was a yes-or-no question. Even though the minister herself continually rises in this House and speaks with certainty about the positive impacts of these schools, it is clear that the government will not commit to keeping these specialized schools open.

On this side of the House, we believe that all children deserve equal access to education that allows them to thrive. If families want to benefit from these schools, they should have every right to do so. This government should not be balancing the books on the backs of vulnerable children and families.

I'll ask again. Will the minister tell concerned families today that no provincial or demonstration school will be closed as a result of consultations?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I think that the member opposite actually hit on the issue here in her question: We believe in equal access for all students with special needs. We are committed to reviewing special education programs and making sure that, in fact, we are meeting the needs of special education students, not, as she said, "locally"—these aren't local schools. They're schools where people literally fly in from around the province.

We need to look at what the availability is of programs in all boards throughout the province, in all regions throughout the province. What's the availability of programs for children with very severe learning disabilities? That's what we're having a look at: equal access.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Ontario's apprenticeship system is a key part of building the highly skilled workforce our province needs to compete in today's global economy. Many constituents in my riding of York South-Weston often ask me about the different ways our government is supporting people entering the skilled trades in Ontario.

I understand that the minister was recently at George Brown College to announce additional funding in two apprenticeship programs that will help the next generation of skilled tradespeople access the training, equipment and facilities they need to get high-quality jobs. Some of my constituents are particularly interested to know how this funding will help those who face barriers start an apprenticeship and access promising careers in a skilled trade.

Speaker, could the minister please inform the members of the House how this funding will help people access apprenticeship programs in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member from York South–Weston for that very timely question.

I recently visited George Brown College to announce that our government is investing \$36 million in two apprenticeship programs as part of Ontario's renewed Youth Jobs Strategy. We are investing \$23 million over two years in the Apprenticeship Enhancement Fund and \$13 million in Ontario's Pre-apprenticeship Training Program.

One example is the Central Ontario Building Trades Hammer Heads Program, which is an excellent program that provides life-changing training opportunities to youth. Our government will continue building Ontario up by ensuring our people have the skills to get good jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this moment to thank all instructors at our 68 training centres run by our colleges and the unions, and employer-based training centres. I want to thank the instructors, journeypersons and the mentors for—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you to the minister for that answer. It is reassuring to know that our government is committed to helping people access apprenticeship programs in the province of Ontario. Our Hammer Heads Program is a tremendous program. They operate in my riding and they have helped many young people.

Many of my constituents who are new to Canada often tell me that they face challenges in finding good jobs because they lack the training and the experience to work in the skilled trades in our province. I understand that one of the minister's priorities is to support newcomers to Canada to enter apprenticeship programs. Could the minister please inform the members of this House on the progress that he and his ministry are making in helping new Canadians through Ontario's Pre-apprenticeship Training Program?

Hon. Reza Moridi: The hard-working member from York South–Weston is absolutely right. Almost one in five new jobs in Ontario over this decade is expected to be in trades-related occupations.

I am pleased to say that Ontario's Pre-apprenticeship Training Program is funding projects that will support newcomers to Canada and to Ontario to access apprenticeship programs. I am proud to say that this year, we are investing nearly \$3 million toward 13 pre-apprenticeship projects that will help new Canadians enter the skilled trades.

Mr. Speaker, our government will continue investing in our people by supporting a high-quality skilled trades and apprenticeship system in our province of Ontario.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Last week, a wind project was awarded to Inver

Energy in Dutton Dunwich, even though this municipality is not a willing host. In fact, 84% of the residents of Dutton Dunwich voted against this wind project. Another municipality in my riding, Malahide, was a willing host, but was not awarded a contract.

This government has stated that municipalities will have a say on wind projects. However, in this latest round of contracts, this does not seem to be the case.

Speaker, will the minister explain to the municipalities in my riding why they are ignoring their voices?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We have a process for large, renewable procurements. That was consulted on very broadly across the province of Ontario, including with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, AMO, and with individual municipalities. We produced a handbook for municipalities and distributed it to every municipality in the province, setting out what the process was.

It was very clear that no municipality would have a veto, but it did require the proponents to have a very, very broad engagement with the municipalities. We provided incentives for them to have agreements with municipalities. Of 16 contracts awarded, 13 of them had willing host communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the minister: Even your own words back in—

Interjections.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, using the testimony from the minister in committee in November 2013, he said that municipalities wouldn't be given a veto over projects, but it would be "very rare indeed" for any to be approved without municipal backing. "It will be almost impossible for somebody to win one of those bidding processes without an engagement with the municipality."

Speaker, either the minister doesn't know what's going on in his ministry or he just wasn't telling the truth in committee.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I withdraw.

Will the minister keep his word and stop the contract from coming to Dutton Dunwich?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: There was very significant engagement in this particular file. We have a quote here from Laurie Spence Bannerman, CAO of Dutton Dunwich, who recognized the efforts of the company to set up a monthly meeting with the working group: "The wind energy company has to show that they're doing things to engage the community and so they were hosting regular monthly meetings. A working group is one of those things that shows that you're engaging the local community." That quote is from Laurie Spence Bannerman, CAO of Dutton Dunwich.

ROB FORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Leader of the Opposition on a point of order.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Toronto councillor and former mayor Rob Ford passed away this morning following a hard-fought battle against cancer. This House sends its condolences to his wife, his children and his loved ones. As a sign that the entire province mourns the loss of Rob Ford, I believe you'll find we have unanimous consent to observe a moment of silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Leader of the Opposition is seeking unanimous consent to do a moment of silence for the passing of Rob Ford. Do we agree?

I would ask all members to please rise and observe a moment of silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for that kind gesture.

DEFERRED VOTES

2016 ONTARIO BUDGET

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1202 to 1207.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members please take their seats? All members, please take your seats. Please? I wonder if there's a competition to see who's the last to sit. I can't figure that one out.

On February 25, 2016, Mr. Sousa moved, seconded by Ms. Wynne, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Anderson, Granville	Gravelle, Michael	Moridi, Reza
Baker, Yvan	Hoggarth, Ann	Murray, Glen R.
Ballard, Chris	Hoskins, Eric	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hunter, Mitzie	Naqvi, Yasir
Bradley, James J.	Kiwala, Sophie	Oraziotti, David
Chan, Michael	Lalonde, Marie-France	Potts, Arthur
Chiarelli, Bob	Leal, Jeff	Qaadri, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	MacCharles, Tracy	Rinaldi, Lou
Coteau, Michael	Malhi, Harinder	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	Mangat, Amrit	Sergio, Mario
Damerla, Dipika	Martins, Cristina	Sousa, Charles
Del Duca, Steven	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Vernile, Daiene
Dhillon, Vic	McGarry, Kathryn	Wong, Soo
Dickson, Joe	McMahon, Eleanor	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dong, Han	McMeekin, Ted	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Nicholls, Rick
Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Michael	Sattler, Peggy

Barrett, Toby	Hatfield, Percy	Scott, Laurie
Brown, Patrick	Hillier, Randy	Singh, Jagmeet
Campbell, Sarah	Hudak, Tim	Smith, Todd
Clark, Steve	Jones, Sylvia	Tabuns, Peter
Coe, Lorne	MacLeod, Lisa	Taylor, Monique
DiNovo, Cheri	Mantha, Michael	Vanthof, John
Fedeli, Victor	Martow, Gila	Walker, Bill
Forster, Cindy	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
French, Jennifer K.	Miller, Paul	Yakubski, John
Gates, Wayne	Natyshak, Taras	Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 53; the nays are 39.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1211 to 1500.

RESIGNATION OF MEMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the membership of the House by reason of the resignation of Bas Balkissoon as the member from the electoral district of Scarborough–Rouge River, effective March 22, 2016. Accordingly, I have issued my warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for a by-election.

It is now time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FRANK KINSELLA

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise today to pay tribute to former mayor Frank Kinsella. Leeds–Grenville lost a champion when Mayor Frank, as he was affectionately known, passed away this month at age 75. As an educator, director of education, Rotarian, councillor and mayor of Leeds and the Thousand Islands, Frank left an indelible mark on countless lives.

Frank knew that being a leader could be difficult, but he never flinched in the face of a challenge. Even those who disagreed with him never doubted that Frank had his community's best interests at heart.

Indeed, even after he lost a bid for re-election in 2010, the community turned to Frank in a time of crisis two years later and he was reappointed mayor. Frank held no grudge. He rolled up his sleeves and inspired others around him to be better. And with Frank leading the way, they were better.

I had the privilege of knowing Frank as a friend, and later he was my boss, because he hired me as a CAO for the township. I can tell you that Frank was the same behind closed doors as he was in public. He wanted to build a stronger, more connected community by empowering people to step forward and do great things. Frank set out to be a community builder, and that's exactly what he leaves as his legacy.

On behalf of everyone in Leeds–Grenville and the province of Ontario, I want to extend my most sincere and deepest condolences to Frank's wife, Mary Lou, his children and his grandchildren. We're all so blessed that they shared Frank with us. We loved him a lot. We're going to miss him.

AGRICULTURE IN WINDSOR-ESSEX

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I am so happy to use my member's statement today to give a shout-out to our province's agricultural workers and our farmers. Today, obviously, being two days after the first day of spring of this year, we know that farmers are busy in the preparation for planting the food which we all appreciate, enjoy and are sustained by.

Of course, we can't forget the economic impact that farmers have in Ontario—being our number two industry in the province, contributing billions of dollars to our GDP every year—and of course, the role they play in the small communities and rural communities in which they operate.

Speaker, in my region of Windsor-Essex, we have one of the longest growing seasons: 212 days per year. Our region is home to North America's largest greenhouse industry, with over 1,700 acres under glass or plastic. With 328,000 acres of farmland, Windsor-Essex generates \$1.2 billion from agricultural activity. Of course, Essex also tops southwestern Ontario when it comes to employment, with 18,487 full-time equivalents in the sector. Only Niagara region is a close second, with 18,400.

Thank you to the farmers who are busy preparing the food that we're going to enjoy. We appreciate and acknowledge your efforts and look forward to supporting you. Have a safe and prosperous and productive season.

COMMUNITY AWARDS

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I rise today to recognize 12 women who recently received Leading Women, Building Communities awards at an event in Mississauga-Brampton South this past Saturday. These awards celebrate those women who demonstrate exceptional leadership in working to improve the lives of others through their work, activism and volunteer activities. They are role models for everyone in our communities, especially for young women.

Despite a lot of progress for women in Ontario, they are still under-represented in private business and leadership roles. Far too often, women are victims of gender-based harassment and violence.

These women are inspirational and worth celebrating, and I thank them for their service to our community.

Congratulations, Judy Yeung, Helene Burrowes, Puneet Chawla, Angela John, Lilian Kwok, Anna Mazurkiewicz, Arifa Muzaffar, Nav Singh, Norma Nicholson, Nira Rajpal, Anu Srivastava and Arpana

Vora. Kudos to all of you. I'm very proud of your work. Keep up the good work.

FOOD AND BEVERAGE INDUSTRY

Mr. Toby Barrett: Today I'd planned on responding to the minister's comments on Food and Beverage Ontario's Taste Your Future campaign, but the minister's statement has been cancelled.

I want to start by quoting Norm Beal, CEO of Food and Beverage Ontario: "We are launching a major campaign called Taste Your Future because there aren't enough people trained in our industry to take these jobs. We need young people and new Canadians interested in our sector for jobs ranging from millwrights to food scientists and marketing people."

Further to CEO Beal's numbers, he indicates that the food and beverage sector has 132,000 direct jobs. There are another 172,000 indirect full-time positions. He touts it as the largest manufacturing/processing sector in the province, bigger than automotive, and a sector that generates \$40.7 billion in revenue.

Following the recession, we know Ontario was hard hit, primarily because of automotive, yet the food and beverage sector grew by 11% from 2007 to 2012. We're second only to Chicago.

I just wanted to point this out. I'm not sure why the statement was cancelled. We've seen a cut to the ministry's budget. Maybe that was one of the reasons. I'll just leave that with the Legislature.

ETHICAL BUSINESS PRACTICES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I rise today to recognize two exemplary London companies that received global recognition this month for ethical business practices and for redefining business success.

On March 4, London tech firm rTraction announced its official designation as London's first Certified B Corporation. B Corps is an international program to recognize for-profit companies that meet rigorous standards of social and environmental performance, accountability and transparency; in other words, companies that use business as a force for good.

Since its founding in 2001, rTraction has been making a difference for its clients, its employees and the London community. As a certified B Corp, rTraction's two brands, Ellipsis Digital and Engine SevenFour, have joined more than 1,400 certified B Corps from 42 countries and over 120 industries.

The same week, on March 7, the US-based Ethisphere Institute named 3M one of the world's most ethical companies for a third year in a row for its ethical business standards, its alignment of principle with action, and its impact in shaping future industry standards.

Londoners are very proud of 3M's long history in our community. Since 1951, London has been home to 3M's Canadian operations, and 3M employs almost 1,000 employees at its head office and manufacturing plant.

To earn the designation of an ethical company, 3M was assessed in multiple categories. This year, 131 honorees were named, spanning 21 countries, five continents and more than 45 industries.

Congratulations to rTraction CEO David Billson and to Paul Madden, 3M Canada's president and general manager.

I'm proud of the leadership shown by London firms to demonstrate that good ethics is good business.

ATTACKS IN BRUSSELS

Mr. Mike Colle: Today I would like to pay tribute to the innocent people who were killed and slaughtered in cold blood in Brussels this morning, and the people of Belgium who saw this act of terrorism rip their city and their airport apart. Innocent people going to work this morning on the metro in Brussels—men, women and children—were killed by these sadistic, cowardly terrorists.

1510

This is just to let the people know in Belgium and all over the world that we stand together with those who are totally in opposition to the type of cowardly, dastardly act that occurred this morning, and that this is not something that we condone or want to see repeated.

We should encourage all citizens in every part of this great country of Canada to stand up to this cowardly terrorism that rips apart this world and contributes to nothing but destruction and hate. It's our time to stand in solidarity with the people of Brussels and the people of Belgium.

MAPLE SYRUP

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: This spring, along with the wonderful member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, I had the privilege of attending the Grey-Bruce first-tapping ceremony at Klein's Maple Syrup, near Mildmay. This particular event highlights the beginning of the maple syrup season.

I must say, Mr. Walker particularly showcased his knack for hammering in the spigot—something to be seen, ladies.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Wow.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Yes.

But in all seriousness, in terms of the maple syrup season, since the earliest settlers arrived along the coastline of Lake Huron, the sugaring season has brought together family and friends to celebrate the transition from winter to the early days of spring. Many of us share fond memories of visiting our local sugar shack to collect sap, enjoying the early springtime and devouring taffy and pancakes at our local festivals.

This season is particularly meaningful for farmers in my community, as it marks the first harvest of the season and the start of an agricultural year.

In addition to its cultural importance, the maple syrup industry is important to Ontario's economy. Last year alone, the syrup producers in my region produced an

impressive 3.9 million gallons of syrup and contributed \$41 billion to our province's GDP. Even better, the maple syrup industry is only expected to grow as Ontarians seek a healthy alternative to traditional sugars.

Maple syrup is one of Ontario's most iconic products. I encourage all my colleagues in the House to visit their local sugar shack or their local festival and enjoy and celebrate one of our delicious snacks in this province.

COMMUNITY AWARDS

PRIX COMMUNAUTAIRES

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: This year, in celebration of International Women's Day, I was delighted to host a breakfast event in Orléans which was such a success, with over 100 great women from our community in attendance. The objective was to meet and celebrate these women, their work and their successes, while giving them an opportunity to engage and get to know one another.

Our event represented Canada's 2016 theme of "Women's Empowerment Leads to Equality." This is why I took the opportunity to present this year's Leading Women, Building Communities recognition awards to 14 deserving women.

Je suis tellement fière, comme députée d'Orléans, d'avoir pu reconnaître ces 14 femmes exceptionnelles pour leur engagement, leur dévouement et leur leadership dans notre communauté. Félicitations encore à chacune d'elles, et j'aimerais utiliser l'opportunité de les nommer en Chambre : Alicia Krolak, Anne-Marie Sisk, Colleen Dupuis-Strong, Jennifer Babe, Karina Potvin, Kassandra Tannouri, Kelsey Lett, Lisa Whittleton, Michelle Desrochers, Rachel Lecours, Sandra Stefanik, Teresa Whitmore, Victoria Powell and Yasmine Fathers.

Thank you, and congratulations to all these wonderful women.

ROB FORD

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I just want to say a few words on Rob Ford, not as the mayor but as a human being and as a person that I knew on city council.

Rob was first elected to city council in the year 2000. I was a councillor at that time as well, and we hit it off pretty well, right from the beginning. I remember that his grandfather lived in my riding, and when his grandfather passed away, he came to me and he said, "Can you say a few words about my grandfather?" I said, "Sure, Rob."

So at the start of the council meeting, I said a few words about his grandfather. I looked across from me and I could see Rob's eyes welling up and tears coming down. After I finished my speech, he came over, shook my hand and was not even able to speak. He was so emotionally moved by the fact that I had spoken about his grandfather. He was a very sensitive and emotional person.

I remember as well that we were debating the budget one day in council and I said, "I don't want my Metro-

pass. I don't want it. I'll pay my own way on the subway." I started arguing with some members of council. All of a sudden, Rob stood up and goes, "I don't want mine either. It's wrong that we get free Metropasses." He became more passionate than I did. Just to see him in his passion and the way he felt strongly about an issue—he didn't care whether he was on the right or wrong side; he did that.

With the permission of the Speaker, I may go a few minutes over, but I just wanted to say that when I was elected, I wanted to be chair of the administration committee in 2000, which was a big committee. I phoned him and I said, "Rob, can you vote for me tomorrow to support me to become admin chair?" He goes, "You can't phone me. That's illegal." I said, "Well, it's not illegal; I'm just asking you to vote for me."

He had a friend and a mentor, Doug Holyday, former member here and former councillor as well. Doug Holyday said to me, "Don't worry, I calmed Rob down. He's going to vote for you." So Rob voted for me and he was on the committee.

He was always opinionated, but honest, and a very emotional human being who loved his job and loved his family. He loved his wife, Renata, and his children, Stephanie and Doug. He was very close to his mum, Diane. I had many chances to meet them and talk to them. He had birthday parties at his house, and I would go with my wife. He would get emotional during his birthdays and say, "Thanks for coming to my birthday party." He was very happy.

There's another side to him that I'm really going to miss and we're all going to miss. It's too early, perhaps, to eulogize him, but I just thought it was appropriate today to say a few words about a wonderful human being who will be missed deeply by his family and even us, his friends here at the Legislature. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I knew better than to cut him off.

I thank all members for their statements.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 163, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 and the Ministry of Labour Act with respect to posttraumatic stress disorder / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du

travail et la Loi sur le ministère du Travail relativement à l'état de stress post-traumatique.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Carried.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated March 2, 2016, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I beg leave to present a report on Education of Aboriginal Students, section 4.05, 2014 Annual Report of the Auditor General of Ontario, from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Hardeman presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: As Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I'm pleased to table the committee's report today, entitled Education of Aboriginal Students, section 4.05 of the 2014 Annual Report of the Auditor General of Ontario.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts: Vice-Chair Lisa MacLeod, Han Dong, John Fraser, Percy Hatfield, Harinder Malhi, Julia Munro, Arthur Potts and Lou Rinaldi.

The committee extends its appreciation to officials from the Ministry of Education, the Algoma District School Board, the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board and the Lakehead District School Board for their attendance at the hearings.

The committee also acknowledges the assistance provided during the hearings and the report-writing deliberations by the Auditor General, the Clerk of the Committee and staff at legislative research.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

1520

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CORPORATION OF MASSEY HALL AND ROY THOMSON HALL ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2016

Mr. Dong moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr39, An Act respecting The Corporation of Massey Hall and Roy Thomson Hall.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

LA FRANCOPHONIE

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Monsieur le Président, it is with great pride that I open my remarks by reminding you that in this House on February 22, the Premier offered an official apology from the Ontario government regarding regulation 17, which prohibited the use of French as a language of education in Ontario schools.

Premier Wynne said the following: “The tremendous courage and tenacity of Franco-Ontarians has not gone unnoticed.”

This historic declaration resonated to an even greater extent here in Ontario on the International Day of La Francophonie, which took place on Sunday, March 20. Ontario’s Francophonie shines brighter than ever, and we have every reason to seize all opportunities to recognize the immense contributions of Franco-Ontarians to the province’s social, economic, cultural and political prosperity.

Partout dans le monde, 80 États et gouvernements francophones et francophiles célèbrent aussi en ce moment la Semaine de la Francophonie, qui a pour thème « Le pouvoir des mots ». Les excuses officielles du gouvernement de l’Ontario, des excuses que cette Assemblée a accueillies avec enthousiasme et sincérité, démontrent justement le pouvoir des mots.

Je tiens aujourd’hui à vous saluer chaleureusement, collègues de l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario, pour votre appui envers les francophones de notre province. Encore une fois, cette belle unanimité rend hommage à la réalité linguistique et culturelle française de l’Ontario, une réalité qui loge de plus en plus à l’enseigne de la diversité. Ceci démontre aussi que l’Ontario est une société inclusive dont tous les membres peuvent pleinement s’épanouir sur tous les plans.

Oui, la francophonie ontarienne a été interpellée par ce geste historique, lequel confirme sans aucun doute la place des francophones dans la société ontarienne.

In 2016, Ontario will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the first French Language Services Act, a bill that was an unprecedented turning point in favour of the expansion of French-language services throughout the province. Thanks to its quasi-constitutional status, this act is a fundamental lever that promotes the overall development of the Francophonie in Ontario.

Je salue donc le père de cette loi, l’ancien député de mon comté d’Ottawa–Vanier et mon bon ami, Bernard Grandmaître.

Je suis fière de souligner que 26 régions de la province sont maintenant désignées en vertu de la loi et que plus de 200 agences et organismes en Ontario sont aussi

désignés pour offrir des services en français, dont six établissements d’enseignement postsecondaire.

D’ailleurs, le Collège universitaire Glendon de l’Université York vient tout juste d’obtenir cette désignation, et j’aurai le plaisir de m’y rendre ce mercredi pour souligner cette étape importante et féliciter au nom du gouvernement, et en votre nom, tous ceux et celles qui ont contribué à cette avancée significative.

In 2015, the commemoration of 400 years of French presence in Ontario was a tremendous success, thanks to the combined efforts of the government and the support of francophones and francophiles across the province and Canada and from elsewhere around the world. Hundreds of events were held during this commemorative year, and we saw promising projects for the future take shape, such as the Rotary Champlain Wendat Park in Penetanguishene.

The commemoration promoted Ontario within Canada, in Quebec and in France. This exceptional exposure will have a long-lasting, positive impact on our relationships with partners from the national and international Francophonie. This commemoration was also instrumental in conveying new knowledge to our youth, and the not so young, enabling them to acquire a better understanding of their francophone history and heritage.

La commémoration a certes donné une nouvelle dose d’énergie à tous les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes. On a beaucoup entendu parler de la francophonie ontarienne en 2015 et, oui, monsieur le Président, ceci a eu un effet mobilisateur. C’est un constat qu’en tant que ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones je fais à tous les jours. La commémoration a eu un effet de levier et je suis très heureuse de constater l’effervescence actuelle qui donnera une toute nouvelle poussée à la francophonie de l’Ontario.

Et je ne peux passer sous silence le renforcement de notre amitié avec la province voisine, le Québec, notre partenaire privilégié, à qui je dis un grand merci pour sa participation au 400^e et sa collaboration exceptionnelle.

Monsieur le Président, dans son message à l’occasion de la Journée internationale de la Francophonie dimanche, la secrétaire générale de l’Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, l’honorable Michaëlle Jean, qui était ma commettante d’ailleurs, disait ceci en parlant de la violence et du terrorisme qui affectent plusieurs États de la Francophonie internationale :

« La menace plane encore et toujours, mais à la stratégie de la terreur, les populations ont voulu, partout, répondre par le courage, par la volonté de se dresser fièrement et de célébrer la vie. »

N’est-ce pas la voie choisie par l’Ontario et le Canada?

We have chosen to be a safe haven for thousands of people who choose to live in Ontario each year. Here, we have adopted laws, policies and regulations that favour linguistic diversity and that respect cultures instead of creating barriers. Here, we have understood the power of words and have chosen to adopt an inclusive, welcoming discourse respectful of our differences.

Here in Ontario, the French language is a jewel that enriches our vision for society and the spirit that nourishes our social and economic well-being. Yes, here we celebrate life in French and Ontario's diversity, which, when combined, serve as a model to the 280 million francophones living everywhere in the world and for all the world's citizens.

J'invite donc tous mes collègues à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario à rendre hommage à la francophonie, à continuer à l'accueillir et à la faire briller comme elles et ils l'ont fait encore si généreusement cette année.

Merci et bonne Semaine de la Francophonie à tous et à toutes.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

It is now time for responses. The member from Thornhill.

M^{me} Gila Martow: Merci, monsieur le Président.

Dimanche passé, le 20 mars, nous avons célébré la Journée internationale de la Francophonie ici en Ontario et partout à travers le monde.

1530

Comme porte-parole des affaires francophones du Parti PC et au nom de notre caucus, j'aimerais prendre ce moment pour souhaiter à tous les francophones et à tous les francophiles en Ontario et au Canada une excellente Semaine nationale de la francophonie.

Vendredi dernier, j'ai eu le plaisir d'assister à la sixième célébration de la Journée internationale de la Francophonie organisée par le comité consultatif communautaire francophone du Service de police de Toronto. Le thème de l'événement de cette année est « La francophonie en 3D : diversité, dualité, dynamisme! ». Ce thème décrit et est inclusif de tous les 611 000 francophones dans la province de l'Ontario aujourd'hui. Cette cérémonie fut un événement spécial car nous avons célébré avec l'invitée d'honneur et conférencière, Son Excellence M^{me} Nouzha Chekrouni, ambassadeur du Royaume du Maroc au Canada. Le Consul général de France à Toronto, M. Marc Trouyet, est venu aussi, avec le chef de la police, M. Mark Saunders; le fondateur de Cinéfranco, Marcelle Lean; et mes amis de la Communauté Juive Marocaine de Toronto.

Aussi, j'ai eu la chance de célébrer cette journée spéciale avec M. Donald Ipperciel, le principal du collège universitaire francophone Glendon, qui fait partie de l'Université de York. Je félicite le collège Glendon d'avoir récemment obtenu sa désignation bilingue en vertu de la Loi sur les services en français.

L'une des personnes qui ont contribué à la culture francophone en Ontario est le président de l'organisme francophone rassembleur de la région de York, AFRY, M. Alain Beaudoin. Cette année, M. Beaudoin est un récipiendaire de l'Ordre de la Pléiade, qui est l'Ordre de la Francophonie et du dialogue des cultures de l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie. Cette reconnaissance prestigieuse reconnaît le mérite des

personnalités qui se sont distinguées en servant les idées de l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie.

Le mois dernier, j'ai visité le Maroc pour le Réseau des femmes parlementaires, qui est une branche de l'organisation de la Francophonie mondiale. J'ai eu l'occasion de rencontrer beaucoup de politiciens qui ont des défis incroyables dans de nombreuses juridictions francophones, en particulier en Afrique.

Il est donc important de continuer à promouvoir la langue française, à la parler et à la partager. En cette occasion, nous allons rassembler et échanger nos histoires pour faire en sorte que les générations futures continuent de bâtir des communautés francophones fortes.

Au mois de juillet 2015, j'ai eu l'occasion de rencontrer la secrétaire générale de la Francophonie, l'honorable Michaëlle Jean, lors du Sommet de la Francophonie en Suisse. Elle est très passionnée par les communautés francophones, et elle est une source d'inspiration pour nous tous. Comme elle l'a bien dit : « Fêtons partout avec allégresse et une conviction renouvelée le pouvoir de notre langue commune, la langue française, et le pouvoir des mots. »

En conclusion, je tiens à réitérer l'importance de créer une université de langue française en Ontario. Partout en Ontario, les francophones souhaitent gérer eux-mêmes leurs programmes universitaires, comme ils le font déjà pour leurs écoles, leurs conseils scolaires et leurs collèges francophones.

Notre parti va continuer à pousser le gouvernement à créer une nouvelle université de langue française.

Soyons fiers de nos racines francophones.

M. Michael Mantha: Bienvenue à tous les gens à la Semaine de la Francophonie. Encore de la part des gens à travers Algoma-Manitoulin, et puis tous les francophones et francophiles à travers la province, ça me fait plaisir d'adresser les participants ici aujourd'hui et au réseau.

Nous voici encore une fois arrivés à la Semaine de la Francophonie. Cette célébration fêtée en Ontario donne l'occasion aux gens francophones de célébrer leur héritage dans leur langue maternelle. Cette semaine dédiée à la langue française permet à plusieurs francophones et francophiles de s'exprimer, de vivre en français et de partager leur culture avec fierté.

Plusieurs organisations en Ontario planifient des événements reliés à la francophonie. Les écoles francophones, surtout, dans les circonscriptions et à travers tout l'Ontario, organisent des cérémonies et des activités spéciales afin de démontrer et enseigner à toutes les générations l'importance de leur patrimoine français. Ceci est une chance de fêter la présence française et ses échos culturels en exposant ses lauréats et contributions au développement de l'Ontario. Au fil des années, la Semaine de la Francophonie s'est fait connaître dans les réseaux et les divers milieux éducatifs et culturels.

Monsieur le Président, nos élèves doivent pouvoir se sentir bien à l'aise de vivre librement dans leur langue maternelle. Il est important d'appuyer tous les efforts qui visent à encourager la communication, le partage et le regroupement entre les communautés et les associations

françaises. En trouvant des moyens d'encourager les échanges et assurer que nos éducateurs ont les ressources nécessaires en éducation francophone, nous espérons que notre future génération insistera à maintenir leurs droits et services préservés par la ténacité et le travail de leurs ancêtres. Toutes celles et tous ceux qui le désirent devraient avoir la chance de vivre pleinement leur distinction francophone avec liberté et bien-être.

À titre de francophone moi-même, j'appuie fortement les efforts de ma collègue France Gélinas, députée de Nickel Belt, et son projet de loi déposé à l'Assemblée, demandant la création d'une université de langue française.

La Semaine de la Francophonie en Ontario est l'occasion ultime d'inviter tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes à se joindre à la célébration. N'oubliez pas de porter votre blanc et vert, qui représentent les couleurs de notre drapeau franco-ontarien. Venez partager vos valeurs francophones et démontrer votre amour de la langue et la culture françaises. Débutons la semaine en exigeant la création d'une université francophone et son conseil d'administration. Donnons un choix viable à nos enfants.

Je vous souhaite une belle Semaine de la Francophonie. Soyons fiers et célébrons en grand nombre. Nous sommes une province—ça fait 400 années qu'on célèbre la francophonie. Ça fait 400 années que nous sommes ici dans notre territoire qu'on appelle maintenant l'Ontario. Aujourd'hui, on est plus de 600 000 personnes. On a beaucoup, beaucoup de fierté; on a beaucoup, beaucoup d'histoire dans la province; et on a beaucoup, beaucoup à célébrer dans ce temps de cette Semaine de la Francophonie.

Monsieur le Président, je te salue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments.

It's now time for petitions.

Interjection: I'm the only girl.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, you can't give me excuses. I already made a commitment to the member from Leeds–Grenville.

PETITIONS

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Mr. Steve Clark: And because of that, because there are so many members, I'm not going to read the "whereases." I'm just going to read the bottom line:

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately reinstate funding streams for demonstration schools and other specialized education services for the duration of the review and to commit to ensuring every student in need is allowed the chance to receive an education and achieve their potential."

I'm pleased to put my signature. I'll send to it the table with page Diluk.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That'll get you chosen to do petitions all the time.

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to "Stop the Closure of Provincial and Demonstration Schools:

"Whereas provincial and demonstration schools in Ontario provide education programs and services for students with special education needs;

"Whereas there are four provincial and three demonstration schools for anglophone deaf, blind, deaf-blind and/or severely learning-disabled students, as well as one school for the francophone students who are deaf, deaf-blind and/or have severe learning disabilities;

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"Whereas even with early identification and early intervention, local school boards are not equipped to handle the needs of these students, who are our most vulnerable children;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"(a) oppose the closure of provincial and demonstration schools and recognize that these specialized schools are the last hope for many children;

"(b) stop the enrolment freeze at these schools in order for students and their families, who have exhausted all other available resources, to have access to equal education for themselves without added costs, to which they, like all students, are entitled to."

I sign this petition and I give it to page Sabrina to deliver.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It's entitled "Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water." It was sent by Mississauga dentist Lisa Bentley. It reads as follows:

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable

to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I am pleased to sign and support this petition and send it down with page Vanessa.

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: To the Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas demonstration schools in Ontario provide incredible necessary support for children with special ... needs;

"Whereas the current review by the government of Ontario of demonstration schools and other special education programs has placed a freeze on student intake and the hiring of teaching staff;

"Whereas children in need of specialized education and their parents require access to demonstration schools and other essential support services;

"Whereas freezing student intake is unacceptable as it leaves the most vulnerable students" in this province "behind; and....

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately reinstate funding streams for demonstration schools and other specialized education services for the duration of the review and to commit to ensuring every student in need is allowed the chance to receive an education and achieve their potential."

I agree with this petition and I present it to page Ariel.

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I have a "Stop the Closure of Provincial and Demonstration Schools" petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas provincial and demonstration schools in Ontario provide education programs and services for students with special education needs;

"Whereas there are four provincial and three demonstration schools for anglophone deaf, blind, deaf-blind and/or severely learning-disabled students, as well as one school for the francophone students who are deaf, deaf-blind and/or have severe learning disabilities;

"Whereas even with early identification and early intervention, local school boards are not equipped to handle the needs of these students, who are our most vulnerable children;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"(a) oppose the closure of provincial and demonstration schools and recognize that these specialized schools are the last hope for many children;

"(b) stop the enrolment freeze at these schools in order for students and their families, who have exhausted all other available resources, to have access to equal education for themselves without added costs, to which they, like all students, are entitled to."

I fully support this petition, will sign my name and give it to page Terry to bring to the Clerks' table.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition here in honour of francophone week for an east Toronto French secondary school.

"Whereas section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees access to publicly funded French-language education; and

"Whereas there are more than 1,000 children attending French elementary schools in east Toronto ... and those numbers continue to grow; and

"Whereas there is no French secondary school yet in east Toronto, requiring students wishing to continue their studies in French" schools "to travel two hours every day to attend the closest French secondary school; and

"Whereas several English schools in east Toronto sit half-empty since there are no requirements or incentives for school boards to release underutilized schools to other boards in need; and

"Whereas it is well documented that children leave the French-language system for the English-language system between grades 8 and 9 due to the inaccessibility of French-language secondary schools, and that it is also well established that being educated in French at the elementary level is not sufficient to solidify French-language skills for life; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged in February 2007 that there is an important shortage of French-language schools in all of Toronto and even provided funds to open some secondary schools; ...

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Education assist French school boards ... in locating an underutilized school building in east Toronto that may be sold or shared for the purpose of opening a French secondary school ... in the community ... so that French students have a secondary school close to where they live."

I certainly agree with this petition, and I'll leave it with page Terry.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the rightful purpose of Ontario's Environmental Protection Act ... is to 'provide for the protection

and conservation of the natural environment.' RSO 1990 ... ; and

"Whereas 'all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem.'—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as below:

"That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and amended immediately to prohibit the establishment of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature, as I agree with this petition, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the opportunity to present it.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition, signed by people from Windsor-Essex and Leamington, to stop the plan to increase seniors' drug costs.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario will require most seniors to pay significantly more for prescription drugs, starting on August 1, 2016, under changes to the Ontario Drug Benefit;

"Whereas most seniors will be required to pay a higher annual deductible of \$170 and higher copayments each and every time they fill a prescription at their pharmacy;

"Whereas the average Ontario senior requires at least eight different types of drugs each year to stay healthy and maintain their independence; and

"Whereas many seniors on fixed incomes simply cannot afford to pay more for prescription drugs and should not be forced to skip medications that they can no longer afford and to put their health in jeopardy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Stop the government's plan to make most Ontario seniors pay more for necessary prescription drugs and instead work to expand prescription drug coverage for all Ontarians."

Speaker, I agree with this, I will sign my name and give it to Vanessa to bring up to the front.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further petitions? The member from—I know this, I know this—Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: You'll have to visit sometime, Mr. Speaker. Then you will know for good.

This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas one in three women will experience some form of sexual assault in her lifetime. When public education about sexual violence and harassment is not prioritized, myths and attitudes informed by misogyny become prevalent. This promotes rape culture. ... Sexual violence and harassment survivors too often feel revictimized by the systems set in place to support them. The voices of survivors, in all their diversity, need to be amplified. Survivors too often face wait times for counselling services as our population grows and operating costs rise for sexual assault support services.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the findings and recommendations of the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment's final report, highlighting the need for inclusive and open dialogue to address misogyny and rape culture; educate about sexual violence and harassment to promote social change; fund sexual assault support" centres "adequately to meet the demand for their counselling and public education programs; address systemic assumptions within the current ... aid structure to ensure survivors are supported and not revictimized; and address attrition rates within our justice system, including examining 'unfounded' cases, developing enhanced prosecution models and providing free legal advice for survivors."

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I agree with this petition. I will sign my name to it and give it to Sohan.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, the abbreviated version:

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital deserves equitable servicing comparable to other Ontario hospitals;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ... Wynne Liberal government immediately provide the necessary funding to Stevenson Memorial Hospital for the redevelopment of their emergency department, operating rooms, diagnostic imaging and laboratory to ensure that they can continue to provide stable and ongoing service to residents in our area."

I agree with the petition and I will sign it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member and remind all members that brevity is a sign of wisdom, so if you have a long petition, you can shorten it.

I recognize further petitions.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Cindy Forster: My petition to the Legislative Assembly is "Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice."

"Whereas once you privatize hydro, there's no return; and

"We'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"We'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"We'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

I support this petition and will send it with page Ariel.

LUNG HEALTH

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from residents in Woodbridge.

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

"Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report, *Your Lungs, Your Life*, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on ... private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on" lung disease issues "with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41" through to third and final reading; and finally, seeking "royal assent immediately upon its passage."

I agree with the petition. I affix my name and give it to Joshua.

ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES

Mr. Michael Harris: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Bill 45 prevents full display of electronic vaping hardware, and accessories, within registered, licensed, age-of-majority-only dedicated vapour stores; and

"Whereas Bill 45 prohibits e-liquid sampling (vaping) indoors of a registered, licensed, age-of-majority-only commercially dedicated vapour store; and

"Whereas these prohibitions in effect restrict the ability of fully trained sales staff to assist customers with

questions, and provide recommendations to facilitate the sales and end use of the products offered for sale; and

"Whereas an expert, independent evidence review published by Public Health England (PHE) concludes that e-cigarettes are significantly less harmful to health than tobacco and have the potential to help smokers quit smoking; and

"Whereas the review's findings include:

"The current best estimate is that e-cigarettes are around 95% less harmful than smoking;

"There is no evidence so far that e-cigarettes are acting as a route into smoking for children or non-smokers;

"Emerging evidence suggests some of the highest successful quit rates are now seen among smokers who use an e-cigarette and also receive additional support from their local stop-smoking services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Allow amendments and/or exemptions to Bill 45 that would permit,

"(1) unregulated, unfettered full display of all electronic vaping hardware, accessories, devices and e-liquid within a registered, licensed, age-of-majority-only dedicated vapour store;

"(2) the ability of fully trained sales staff to fully assist customers with the inquiry, questions and recommendations to facilitate the sales and end use of the products offered for sale;

"(3) allowance of e-liquid sampling (vaping) indoors of a registered, licensed, age-of-majority-only commercially dedicated vapour store."

I will sign this petition and send it down with Deanna.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank the member for exercising brevity with that petition.

The time for petitions has now expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LA LOI FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO SANS FUMÉE

Ms. Damerla moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 178, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act / Projet de loi 178, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the minister.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: It is an honour and a privilege to rise today to speak to the second reading of the Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act, 2016. I want to say that I will be sharing my time with the member from Halton.

I've said this before and it bears repeating: As the associate minister responsible for wellness, I believe that an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. It is with that belief in mind that we have introduced this bill.

This is a simple bill, but with far-reaching consequences. Essentially, the bill seeks to amend the existing Smoke-Free Ontario Act to enable us to better protect Ontarians from second-hand smoke, whether it comes from a tobacco product or another substance. As it stands, the Smoke-Free Ontario Act is limited to tobacco. The time has now come to expand the reach of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act beyond tobacco.

The Smoke-Free Ontario Act, when it came into force in May 2006, was a landmark piece of legislation and continues to be so—legislation that has touched each of our lives, legislation that means an entire generation of Ontarians has grown up without ever inhaling second-hand smoke on a subway or a streetcar, an entire generation that has never seen anyone smoke inside a theatre or an office, that has never been forced to inhale second-hand smoke inside a restaurant or a bar.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to recognize the passion that so many members of this Legislature have brought to this issue. I believe that all 107 members have been touched by this legislation in some form or fashion, because all of us have friends or family or know somebody who smokes or is trying to smoke. I thank them all for their passion, but I want to also recognize my two critics, the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and the member for Nickel Belt.

I recall the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound sharing in this Legislature a truly moving story of the impact of smoking on his family—stories of personal loss and heartbreak due to smoking, including the loss of his sister Marj to cancer. It is these very personal stories that are so much a part of why each of us in this Legislature tries each and every day to do our best to make Ontario a better place.

The member for Nickel Belt has, of course, brought exemplary leadership to helping to make legislative changes as we relentlessly push the needle on driving down smoking rates. In particular, I want to thank her for her advocacy on the issue of banning flavoured tobacco.

It would be remiss of me if I did not recognize and thank the many advocates and stakeholders in Ontario who have worked with this government to reduce smoking: the Ontario Lung Association; the Canadian Cancer Society; the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco. And I really want to thank and recognize Chris Yaccato, who is no stranger to this Legislature, and who always shows up in this Legislature every time we are making any changes or announcements around smoking. Thank you, Chris, and thank you to the Ontario Lung Association.

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I also wanted to give a special shout-out, at this point, to the youth volunteers of Big Tobacco Lies. Many of us took part in many of their advocacy programs. It's been such a pleasure to work with the youth and see high

school and university kids come to Queen's Park and advocate on behalf of a smoke-free Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, because of all of these efforts, we know that smoking rates have decreased over time in Ontario, from 24.5% in 2000 to 17.4% in 2014. The number of smokers has decreased over time, as well, from 2.4 million in 2000 to 2 million in 2014. This decrease in the number of smokers is particularly notable because Ontario achieved this decrease while its population actually increased during the same period.

We have driven down rates, in part, because of so many of the changes that we brought in through smoke-free Ontario legislation. Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, I just want to give a brief, short history of how Ontario became progressively smoke-free.

It was on June 13, 2005, that the landmark legislation, the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, received royal assent, and it came into force on May 31, 2006. The act made it illegal in Ontario to smoke in enclosed work spaces and public places. It also made it illegal to smoke tobacco in schools, day nurseries, common areas of condominiums and apartments, reserved seating areas of sports and entertainment venues, among other places.

In January 2009, we brought in further restrictions and made it illegal to smoke tobacco in motor vehicles with passengers under the age of 16. In July 2010, we introduced prohibitions on the sale of flavoured cigarillos and established rules for cigarillo packaging. In 2011, we introduced stronger controls over all types of raw leaf tobacco grown in or imported into Ontario.

Last year, we took another significant step toward our Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy. We banned the smoking of tobacco on and around children's playgrounds and publicly owned sports fields and surfaces, and on bar and restaurant patios. We also banned the sale of tobacco on university and college campuses, and we banned the sale of all flavoured tobacco, including menthol.

Through the 2016 Ontario budget, we're proposing to increase the tobacco tax rate by \$3 per carton of 200 cigarettes and use the estimated \$5 million in increased revenues from the tax in 2016-17 to enhance priority populations' access to smoking cessation services.

We have taken steps, Mr. Speaker, to reduce the access to, and discourage young adults from taking up, smoking, such as banning the sale of tobacco products on post-secondary campuses. Research has shown that the earlier an individual begins smoking, the more cigarettes they're likely to smoke and the less likely they are to quit. Delaying smoking initiation by even a few years might have both individual and public health benefits.

But despite the significant progress we have made in curbing the use of tobacco products, the fact is that 13,000 Ontarians still die each year as a result of tobacco-related diseases. We know that tobacco-related diseases cost Ontario's health system an estimated \$2.2 billion in health care costs and account for 10% of the acute care hospital stays; and that tobacco-related diseases cost Ontario an additional \$5.3 billion in indirect costs due to value of production that is lost as a result of

premature mortality, long- or short-term disability, and reduced productivity while at work.

But Mr. Speaker, the real cost is not in health care; the real cost is not in the loss to the economy; the real cost is in the health and quality of life of Ontarians. That is why our government continues to build on the progress we have made through the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy, alongside all of our partners, to achieve among the lowest smoking rates in Canada.

While we are proud of the accomplishments we have made to date, we know there is still more work to be done, which brings us to the act we are debating today. We believe that it is time to expand the scope of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to include substances other than tobacco—specifically, medical marijuana. As it stands today, the Smoke-Free Ontario Act only applies to tobacco. There are few laws that regulate smoking other products or substances like medical marijuana, and we recognize that we need to address this. We are now moving to regulate the smoking and vaping of medical marijuana in Ontario.

We have to consider that the number of people in Canada who are legally able to possess marijuana for medical purposes under the federal framework is steadily rising. Health Canada reports that as of September 2015, there were around 30,000 medical marijuana users in Canada who were registered with licensed producers of marijuana under federal regulations. That is up from 23,000 registered users in June 2015.

Since the most common method of consuming medical marijuana is smoking, some businesses and employers have grappled with how to provide safeguards for their patrons and employees from exposure to second-hand medical marijuana smoke. Our government held preliminary consultations with health care providers, medical marijuana users, producers, restaurant and other business owners, and public health organizations to inform the proposal we have put forward. We also learned a great deal through the public hearings process for the Making Healthier Choices Act, 2015, that took place in the spring of 2015. That is why our government has introduced legislative amendments that, if passed, would expand the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to regulate the smoking of other products and substances specified in regulation.

If the proposed amendments to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act are passed, we would also consider regulatory amendments to prescribe medical marijuana by regulation as a substance that is subject to no-smoking rules. Put simply, by including medical marijuana under smoke-free Ontario legislation, it would mean that if you cannot smoke tobacco somewhere, you will not be able to smoke medical marijuana either.

To ensure we have a level playing field between the smoking and vaping of medical marijuana, we're also proposing separate amendments to the regulation of the Electronic Cigarettes Act to prohibit the use of e-cigarettes to consume medical marijuana in all enclosed public places, enclosed workplaces and other specified outdoor areas.

We recognize that this is a complex issue requiring extensive consultation and evaluation. That is why we're continuing to consult on a discussion paper through the regulatory registry to understand the potential implications that the proposed regulatory measures would have for Ontarians. Ontarians have until April 24 to submit their comments on the discussion paper on proposed changes to the regulations. The regulatory registry posting of the discussion paper is a key step in consulting with businesses and the public. Through this posting, we expect to receive valuable input from stakeholders to inform our approach.

Our goal has always been to reach decisions that reflect the best approach for Ontario. Our proposed approach is intended to protect Ontarians, especially children and youth, from exposure to second-hand tobacco and medical marijuana smoke. The ministry believes that this approach establishes reasonable and precautionary safeguards against second-hand exposure to medical marijuana smoke and vapour by members of the public.

If passed, this legislation would:

- add “prescribed products and substances” to the application of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act;

- specify that smoking or holding a lighted prescribed product or substance is prohibited in enclosed public places, enclosed workplaces or any other place where the smoking of tobacco is prohibited;

- specify that smoking or holding a lighted prescribed product or substance is prohibited in motor vehicles while another person who is less than 16 years old is present;

- specify that sections of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act that set out employer and proprietor obligations, protection from employer reprisal and protection of home health care workers apply to a prescribed product or substance;

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- exempt scientific research and testing facilities from the prohibition on smoking a prescribed product or substance;

- add provisions that would authorize the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, specifying other places where the smoking or holding of a prescribed product or substance is prohibited, and providing for exemptions; and

- apply existing inspection, enforcement and offence provisions to a prescribed substance or product.

If this proposal to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act is passed, we would be taking the first necessary step to further protect Ontarians from exposure to second-hand medical marijuana. By prescribing, in regulation, medical marijuana as a substance that is subject to the smoke-free Ontario provisions that prohibit smoking in enclosed workplaces, enclosed public places and other outdoor areas, we would be establishing reasonable and precautionary safeguards against public exposure to second-hand medical marijuana smoke in smoke-free areas.

It will also provide the framework for the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to regulate substances other than tobacco or

medical marijuana in the event that, in the future, Ontario needs to consider adapting the legislation to cover other substances as well.

This, Mr. Speaker, is a forward-thinking piece of legislation that considers not only the needs of today but how we can build on this legislation in years to come to accommodate the need for change. Since taking on my role as associate minister, I have spoken a great deal about the importance of protecting our youth from the dangers of tobacco—as I like to say, to try to stop that next generation of smokers from ever starting.

We know that children are more vulnerable to the harmful effects of second-hand smoke exposure. Studies show that young people are less likely to become regular smokers when living in areas with strong tobacco control regulations, as compared to areas where regulations are weaker. If we prevent youth from taking up smoking in the first place, that will mean fewer smokers and healthier Ontarians. We need to do everything we can to protect all Ontarians from the harmful effects of second-hand smoke, be it from tobacco or medical marijuana.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Absolutely.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I thank the minister for seniors for his support.

I'm confident there is significant support for this proposal from public health and tobacco control stakeholders, as well as most businesses and employers in Ontario. We have been listening to all of the affected stakeholders and we understand that there is a desire for one straightforward set of rules and regulations with respect to the application of the law around medical marijuana, and where it can and cannot be smoked.

We are eager to continue to consult with the public about the implications of this proposal through the posting of the discussion paper on the regulatory registry.

Finally, it's worth noting that the smoke-free Ontario legislation will be marking its 10th anniversary in May of this year. To commemorate this significant milestone in our province's history, I am honoured and excited to share with the Legislature that the province is announcing the Heather Crowe Smoke-Free Ontario Award.

Heather Crowe, as we know, died of lung cancer even though she said she had never smoked a single cigarette in her life. Heather, who worked as a waitress for over 40 years, used her personal tragedy to raise awareness of the dangers of second-hand smoke. She travelled across Canada to advocate for improved second-hand smoke laws. Tragically, she died days before the Smoke-Free Ontario Act came into force on May 31, 2006. I believe it is only fitting that on the 10th anniversary of this act, we honour her legacy.

Ontario is now accepting applications for its Heather Crowe Smoke-Free Ontario Award, which will recognize anti-smoking advocates who have made a significant contribution towards achieving a smoke-free Ontario. Nominations for this award may be submitted to sfoaward2016@ontario.ca.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to repeat that email for any viewers who are watching or any MPPs who are paying attention. If you want to submit nominations to the Heather Crowe Smoke-Free Ontario Award, please forward them before the end of April to sfoaward2016@ontario.ca. Each of the 107 MPPs should be receiving in the mail details of the award and how they can help nominate constituents that they think may be deserving of this award.

To mark the upcoming 10th anniversary of smoke-free Ontario, up to 10 awards will be presented to recognize individuals, groups and organizations that have championed tobacco control in Ontario over the past 10 years. I would implore all 107 MPPs in this Legislature to get the word out, because we want to make sure that deserving Ontarians do get the nomination for this award. Nomination submissions can be made by anyone and nominations are open until April 29, 2016. The award winners will be recognized on May 31, 2016, on World No Tobacco Day.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we're committed to finding the right solution for Ontario and will continue to work towards that goal. I look forward to what I am sure will be a hearty debate of this proposed legislation and all constructive feedback that comes from it. I'm confident that all members can stand behind our proposed legislation that will help make Ontario the healthiest place in North America to grow up and grow old.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Sharing the debate time with the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, I recognize the member from Halton.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in support of the Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act, 2016. I would like to thank the associate minister for the opportunity to speak to this important piece of legislation, which, if passed, would strengthen smoking laws in Ontario and build on the progress made by the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy.

Mr. Speaker, this is a plan for the future. More importantly, this is a plan for our children. It benefits Ontario residents and has a direct impact on the health and well-being of people of all ages and on our health care system.

Why are we doing this? Well, here is the harsh reality: Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death and illness in Ontario. There are approximately 13,000 tobacco-related deaths each year in Ontario. That's 36 deaths a day. Just think about it. Tobacco-related deaths also cost the Ontario economy at least \$1.6 billion in health care annually. Finally, tobacco use and exposure to second-hand smoke can cause major damage in children, like asthma attacks, alterations in lung development and chronic middle ear disease.

It is our duty as elected members to protect people from the harmful effects of smoking, and that doesn't just mean tobacco anymore. It includes vaporizers and medical marijuana. As society and habits change, it is our responsibility to make sure our rules and regulations

evolve and change with us, and that's what we're doing with these proposed amendments. These amendments are the natural progression and reflection of our society.

As the associate minister has outlined, the passage of the legislation under debate today would amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to allow for the inclusion of other prescribed products and substances besides tobacco. This will allow our government to move forward with proposed amendments that would prescribe medical marijuana by regulation as a substance that is subject to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act's no-smoking rule. As a parent, I can't tell you how important this is to me.

It would also work with our proposed regulatory amendments under the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2015, to prohibit the use of e-cigarettes, including the use of vaporizers, to consume medical marijuana. It is important to be clear that these changes are specific to enclosed public spaces, enclosed workspaces and other specified areas—areas where the flow of fresh air may be restricted and put non-smokers at risk.

In making these changes, our government will be protecting Ontarians, especially children and youth, from exposure to second-hand tobacco and second-hand medical marijuana smoke and the potential harms of e-cigarette use.

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Our government believes this is a reasonable approach that establishes important precautionary safeguards against second-hand exposure to medical marijuana smoke and vapour for members of the general public. We are helping to lower the health risks to non-smokers in Ontario. We are keeping Ontarians healthy by giving them a smoke-free, healthy environment to live in. It's the right thing to do.

In my riding of Halton, for example, the population is rapidly growing, which means more and more families and young kids. It also means that neighbourhoods are becoming increasingly dense and people are living closer to each other. As a community and as neighbours, we need to remember that our actions can affect those around us, and with that proximity and closeness comes responsibility.

As the representative for Halton, it is part of my responsibility to do everything I can to make sure that Halton families can enjoy the healthiest environment possible. That means putting my full support behind a smoke-free Ontario. The health impacts related to smoking are serious issues that affect our children, our seniors—as the minister responsible for seniors beside me will agree—and our health care system.

That is why we have put in place legislation that protects youth from tobacco products and e-cigarettes, and limits their exposure to second-hand smoke in public areas. By shielding young people from outside sources of second-hand smoke and by preventing them from ever taking it up themselves, we are not only protecting our kids, but we are also ensuring that there will be less impact on the health care system in the future.

Mr. Speaker, just yesterday I was at the Juravinski Cancer Centre in Hamilton. I saw first-hand what cancer can do to individuals and families. Believe me, I walked away from that centre feeling that we must do everything we can to protect people and protect Ontario residents.

Less than a year ago, I had a conversation with my own teenage daughter that directly relates to what we're talking about today. She was 16 at the time, and she came to me to express her concern about the rising popularity of vaping. She said, "Mom, these kids think it's cool to vape in public." Long ago, of course, we had talked about the dangers concerning tobacco, but vaping was a new discussion that we needed to have. She told me she was worried about her friends and that they may take it up, and about the lasting effects it may have on them. She was also concerned that vaping could lead to smoking tobacco, and she was concerned for her own health, from being exposed to people who are vaping. We had a good talk, but I know we will both be reassured, if the proposed amendments here are passed, to know that there are strict rules and regulations that will protect my daughter and all Ontarians from the effects of second-hand smoke. By preventing kids from ever starting, it helps us to achieve our goal of having the lowest smoking rate in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, through legislation like the proposed amendments we're talking about today, our government is investing in everyone's future. The associate minister has walked us through the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy and explained the role these proposed amendments would play in that strategy. Today I will speak to the specifics of what these amendments would address, if passed, and what they would mean for those affected.

The first piece of the proposed legislation would amend a provision in the Smoke-Free Ontario Act that would allow the Ontario government to prescribe by regulation products or substances subject to the act's no-smoking rules. Just as tobacco is currently regulated under the act, this would allow the government to specify no-smoking rules for other substances, such as medical marijuana.

Expanding the scope of the act would also allow for the appropriate enforcement of rules in the event that someone should break the law. This is important. We need to be able to do something if someone breaks the law.

Under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, owners or occupiers of any place in which smoking of tobacco is not permitted are responsible for posting no-smoking signage. This is crucial and acts as a further deterrent to smoking.

Should these proposed amendments pass, that signage will also apply to prescribed products and substances, including medical marijuana. This is a simple and straightforward rule that will be clear to the general public: If you see a no-smoking sign, it applies to the smoking of medical marijuana as well. It's in keeping with what our government is hearing from stakeholders about the need for clear and consistent provincial direc-

tion on the smoking of medical marijuana in public places.

In the spirit of the proposed amendment, we will also recommend amending the act to spell out exactly where it will be illegal for a person to smoke or hold a lit prescribed product or substance. For instance, this includes: enclosed public spaces; enclosed workplaces; schools as defined in the Education Act; the building or grounds of a private school; the common areas in a condominium, apartment building or university or college residence, including elevators, hallways and parking garages; child care centres, places where home child care is provided or places where an early-years program or services are provided; the reserved seating area of a sports arena or entertainment venue; or in any other area prescribed by regulation. Again, this reflects all the places where, under current legislation, it is prohibited to smoke tobacco, ensuring that the new measures would be consistent with the existing rules.

Mr. Speaker, we are doing everything we can to protect Ontarians, keep them healthy and protect them from second-hand smoke.

It also ensures consistent protection from exposure, as I said, to second-hand smoke, whether it is from tobacco or medical marijuana.

The proposed amendments also speak to the responsibilities—not just government's responsibilities, but the responsibilities of employers and proprietors in charge of enclosed workplaces, enclosed public places, or any other public location I just referenced.

As I mentioned earlier, with changes in society comes responsibility, and that responsibility is shared. It is not just the place of governments to ensure that we are doing the right thing. Everybody carries some of the share of this responsibility.

It lays out what their responsibilities would be under the legislation, should these proposed amendments be passed. This is important. These obligations are consistent with the obligations of employers and proprietors with respect to tobacco smoking. Their responsibilities would include making sure that anyone in these spaces complies with the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and that they give each person in the prohibited space proper notice that they are in a no-smoking area.

The employer or proprietor would be responsible for posting the proper signage as prescribed under the act, and for ensuring that anyone who refuses to respect Ontario's smoking laws is removed from the no-smoking area. These proposed amendments are simply an extension of the law as it exists now for smoking tobacco, and it only makes sense that this should be applied to medical marijuana as well, in order to limit Ontarians' exposure to second-hand smoke.

When it comes to the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy, one of our key goals has always been to protect children and youth from exposure to second-hand smoke from tobacco. With these proposed amendments, we would be able to expand that protection to medical marijuana or other prescribed substances.

That is why the amendments would also make it illegal to smoke prescribed products and substances, such as medical marijuana, in a motor vehicle where someone who is less than 16 years old is present. I think this is great news. It's an important step to protect the rights of children and to protect their health. Again, this would be an extension of the current rules around smoking tobacco in a motor vehicle and would protect our children and youth from exposure.

It also reflects the consistent approach we are proposing to take with prescribed products and substances.

However, the government understands that it may be necessary to make allowances in very specific circumstances. Included among the proposed amendments is an exemption for scientific research and testing facilities. Under the exemption, employers and proprietors of scientific research and testing facilities cannot be found to have violated the proposed legislation by smoking or holding lighted prescribed products or substances, provided they are being used for the purpose of scientific research or testing. Why are we doing this? Because we need to be able to conduct research. The same is also true of the person smoking or holding a lighted prescribed product or substance.

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Again, this proposed amendment is fairly straightforward. Our government does not want to do anything to deter scientific research and testing that is being conducted, and is necessary, with respect to medical marijuana. This is important work, and we understand the importance of this research and the impact it will have on the industry. We offer these same protections already to facilities doing research and testing on tobacco.

Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that we learn more about the effects of tobacco, medical marijuana and other substances, so that we can better understand the health impacts on Ontarians. The more we learn, the greater the strides we can make in educating the public in developing cessation methods and finding potential cures for diseases, and the more we can do to protect Ontarians and their health.

Finally, with respect to the remainder of the proposed amendments, they are designed to ensure that, if passed, the legislation would allow for the proper application and enforcement of the law. This means that prescribed products and substances such as medical marijuana would be subject to the same rules that relate to inspectors and inspections—this is key—and the penalties for failing to abide by the law will result in the same penalties for those who break the laws with respect to tobacco smoking.

Mr. Speaker, based on what I have outlined here today, I believe that what we have before us is a proposal that would strengthen the existing Smoke-Free Ontario Act. These proposed amendments would build on existing legislation that is already working for the people of Ontario. These amendments would also lay the groundwork for other products or substances to be added at some point in the future, should it be necessary. This

proposed legislation deals not just with the issue of the moment, but also gives Ontario the means to effectively address other similar situations in a much more expedient fashion, should they arise in the future. It's forward-looking, and that's important.

It would also ensure consistency with other proposed legislation and regulations currently under consideration. As outlined by the associate minister, our government is already proposing amendments to the regulations under the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2015, that would prohibit the use of e-cigarettes—and vaporizers to consume any substance—in all enclosed public spaces, enclosed workplaces and other specified areas. This proposal has already been posted on the Regulatory Registry for comment until April 24 this year.

It is just one of several regulatory amendments we are considering with respect to e-cigarettes. Others include the establishment of rules for the display and promotion of e-cigarettes at the places where they are sold, and to expand the list of places where e-cigarettes are prohibited from sale, just to name a few.

The government is considering these regulatory amendments because we are committed to protecting Ontarians from the potential harm of e-cigarettes. What we don't want is a situation where it is illegal to vape medical marijuana but legal to smoke it in an enclosed public space or workplace. We want to ensure that the same rules apply to those who consume medical marijuana by smoking it, and we want to put in place legislation that protects everyone from exposure to second-hand smoke or vape.

It is also about consistency. Whether you smoke or vape your medical marijuana, you are consuming the same prescribed substance, and our government—and, I think, most Ontarians—would like to see laws that are applied consistently.

Speaker, I want to appeal to all members to support the proposed legislation and amendments before us. They are a vital part of maintaining and improving public health, and it's an investment in the long-term sustainability of Ontario's health care system. They protect Ontarians—especially children and youth—from exposure to second-hand tobacco and medical marijuana smoke and the potential harms of e-cigarette use.

Mr. Speaker, just on a personal note, I want to say to you that I recently found out that a very good friend of mine actually has lung cancer, and was diagnosed just within the last week. I can't tell you how important legislation like this is to Ontarians, to our children and to protecting people from having to deal with cancer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakubuski: I'm pleased to comment specifically on the minister's address today.

It's difficult to be critical sometimes, but sometimes it has to be said. We're here debating Bill 178 because the minister messed up.

Mr. Todd Smith: Totally.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Totally messed up. I saw her on television talking about how you were going to be able to smoke that medical marijuana in the park, going to be able to smoke it on the bus and wherever. Then I guess she got taken out to the woodshed by the Premier about an hour and a half later and got read the riot act and said, "Hey, no. That's not going to happen."

If the government had done their due diligence and brought in the proper legislation in the first place, we wouldn't be debating this bill in the House. It's not much of a bill; it's a few pages. But it should be—

Mr. Todd Smith: It's the "Oops, we screwed up" bill.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Yes. It should be the "Help me out; I messed up" bill. That's what it should be called on behalf of the minister.

Now, at the end of the day, because they did mess it up so badly—can I say screwed up? I don't know if I can or not.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakubuski: It's not allowed, apparently.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Withdraw.

So because they messed up so badly, we're forced to debate this. I like some of the stuff in the bill because it does clarify it, but it's unnecessary. If they would have clarified it in the first place, we wouldn't be having this debate.

At the end of the day, I support some of the changes when it comes to medical marijuana. We still have to discuss this more amongst ourselves, but I'd like to think that we're on the right track.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I've said before in this House that there's no harm in admitting to a mistake. I think, to some extent, that's what is happening here today with this bill. A mistake was made when they first introduced medical marijuana—the concept that you could smoke it in places where you wouldn't expect it to be smoked, and now we're changing that. So no problem; we're going to correct it. That's the way it is.

When it comes to smoking, there have been a lot of mistakes made, Speaker. I know you're young enough to remember getting on an airplane when people used to smoke on airplanes in this country. Believe it or not, I think the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke's father used to have an ashtray on his desk here in the House and they used to smoke here in this hallowed chamber. It probably smelled like an ashtray, but it was this chamber that we're in today.

In the past, we have made mistakes when it comes to smoking. I know when I worked at the CBC, I was one of the champions to get smoking out of my workplace. I didn't want to be bothered by it. I haven't smoked in more than 40 years. I didn't want some guy walking through with a cigar, infecting my workspace. So I led the fight at CBC Windsor to get smoking out of the workplace, and I'm glad I did.

I've lost very close relatives through lung cancer. I know what they went through. I wouldn't want anybody else to go through it. I think the medical evidence is there and strong enough that there's a direct correlation between tobacco, tobacco use, second-hand smoke, if you will, and lung cancer.

Whatever we can do to improve the health of the people in this province I think is worth supporting. This bill is certainly worthy of support as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: It's a pleasure for me to get up and speak and support Minister Damerla on this particular bill.

We can talk about why this bill is before us and perhaps say that we didn't do a good enough job on the first go-round, as the opposition has mentioned, but nobody's perfect. I think bringing this back actually gives us a better opportunity to continue to talk about our Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

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Speaker, I'd like to provide you with a confession today. I never smoked a cigarette before I was 45 years old. When I turned 45, shortly thereafter I started smoking menthols. I smoked for seven years. I was able to see my father, who smoked a pipe for his entire adult life, from what I can remember—and my father did end up with cancer in the nose and tumours, and went through radiation and had his complete face affected and burned. I watched him go through that. It took me a while to really absorb the effect that it had on his life. When you're smoking, you think it's the greatest thing in the world. You're addicted to it. But I said to myself, on his birthday in 2015—December 12—that I was done after seven years of smoking. I had tried a couple of times. I haven't smoked a cigarette since December 12, 2015, and I don't intend to smoke again.

I wanted to share that with members of the House because it's not easy. I did it cold turkey. I just pretended that I was sick for a week, without the sniffles. It's a tough thing to do—you're not the same person that you normally are—but you get over it and you get through it and you just keep working at it.

I want to encourage all Ontarians out there who actually do smoke. You can do it. You can stop. Do whatever you need to, but stop. Not only is it good for yourself, but it's also good for the health care of all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to bring some comments on the presentations by the two members of the government on Bill 178, trying to fix the mistakes that they made back in late 2015, when the bill first passed. It was kind of a ridiculous couple of hours; I've got to be honest. I was watching on the news as the minister said that you were going to be able to smoke these medicinal marijuana vapours basically anywhere you wanted.

I think the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke referred to the Premier taking the minister out to the woodshed. I don't believe there are any woodsheds here in downtown Toronto, but I'm sure that she was read the riot act because her ministry obviously didn't do their job. There are a heck of a lot of people in that ministry, and I can't believe that they didn't get it right the first time.

The parliamentary assistant said that these amendments “only make sense.” Well, how many people took a look at this legislation before it was passed and didn't see that what they were actually passing didn't make any sense at all? There was a lack of common sense involved in the bill in its origin anyway. Good for them for realizing that they made a mistake, but I think a lot of it had to do with public opinion polls and the realization that they had made a big mistake when it came to this.

I'll be talking for 20 minutes a little bit later this afternoon about a local issue in Belleville and what happened because of the mistakes of this ministry and a confrontation that occurred in Belleville when I get the chance—in just a few minutes, actually. They are getting it right, now, on the second opportunity. If only they would fix some of the other pieces of legislation that they've messed up on, like the Green Energy Act and their cap-and-trade program. Hopefully, this is the start of something good from this Liberal government, and they're going to fix all of the mistakes that they've made over the last 12 years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now back to the member from Halton for final comments.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I want to thank the members from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Windsor–Tecumseh and Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for their comments over the last little while.

Once again, it's pretty clear to me that the opposition and the members opposite really do support this Smoke-Free Ontario Act. I think that Bill 178 is an extremely important bill. I think it's necessary; I think it's forward-looking; and, as I said earlier, I really feel that it does what it needs to do when it comes to protecting our young people and our children.

It aims to protect the health of the people of Ontario by regulating the sale, supply, distribution, promotion and smoking of tobacco products and also other substances, like medical marijuana. Why is this important? Because we know that you wind up sometimes in enclosed spaces, and we need to ensure that we make amendments to reflect the new reality that we are living in in this year of 2016.

With the help of this legislation, the government will now be able to prescribe, through regulation, that medical marijuana is one of the products or substances that is subject to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act's no-smoking rules. This could mean really important stuff when it comes to public spaces—when it comes to signage, for example. It's also ensuring that there will be rules in place that will ensure there will be enforcement. It also ensures that we are doing everything we can to put in

place further protections for Ontarians from being exposed to second-hand smoke.

I'm especially pleased about the proposal to have it not be allowed that children 16 years of age or under be riding in vehicles where there may be the possibility of second-hand smoke from medical marijuana. This is so key to a child's human rights and their health.

Mr. Todd Smith: A point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): On a point of order, I recognize the member from Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, I believe you'll find that we have unanimous consent to stand down our leads on Bill 178.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed? Agreed.

Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to join the debate again on Bill 178. As was mentioned earlier by my colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, this should have been called the "we-messed-up bill, but we are going to get it right eventually." That's what the actual title of this bill should be. The Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act is the actual title of the bill put forward by this Liberal government. They made a big mistake, and they had some egg on their face back before Christmas, but they've done the right thing. Now they're moving on, and they are going to get it right for everyone in Ontario.

This is really a perfect example of the government shooting from the hip on an initial set of regulations, only to face blowback because the talking points for the original bill didn't actually match the legal reality that we're facing here in Ontario, or common sense. It was lacking in those areas.

When Bill 45 was originally introduced into the Legislature, it was met with resistance by people who had wanted to be able to use electronic cigarettes as stop-smoking aids. I had the opportunity to go to a shop in Trenton in Quinte West called the Stinky Canuck where they actually sell these smoking aids. I met with a lot of folks who had smoked for 20, 30 or 40 years. They were given the opportunity to use these vaporizers or e-cigarettes to kick the habit. It works, and it's something that we shouldn't put a ban on. It's something that we need to study because when you consider the fact that these people who had smoked for 20, 30 or 40 years were getting off cigarettes, moving to the vaporizers and then eventually getting away from the vaporizers and quitting any kind of smoking, including vaping—these are a cessation aid. They were treated as something sinister by this government originally, but that's another story.

There was a chance to have a reasonable and rational debate in this House about what could be done to accommodate this new technology and how it could be regulated and controlled in the marketplace. That's not a new idea, Mr. Speaker. It's something we've done a lot. We've done it regularly in this House as we discussed the sharing economy. That's a bill put forward by my

colleague in Niagara West—Glanbrook which deals with the sharing economy: Airbnb, Uber and other businesses in what they call the sharing economy. Instead, though, the government decided to immediately move to declare that it would ban these vaporizers or e-cigarettes, which were successful for an awful lot of people. Sadly, it was a predictable response from this government.

Smoking rates can always be lower. There's no question about that. I've actually brought forward my own private member's legislation to try and accomplish that. It did receive unanimous support here in the Legislature a few months ago. Nobody wants anyone under the age of 19 to have access to products that could harm their health—and justifiably. Until we know more about products, we have a responsibility to regulate them effectively in an attempt to minimize harm. That's what should have happened, and this is beyond dispute. But this is what happens when you politicize substance control rather than just regulate it.

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Ontario has taken multiple steps to crack down on tobacco usage, and we commend them for that. The Smoke-Free Ontario Act was a major step in this. But there have been others throughout the years, and we've talked about them a bit this afternoon already. All of this is predicated on the idea that tobacco usage, while legal, is bad and should be contained and heavily regulated. It's a policy position that, based on my work to fight illegal tobacco, I am inclined to agree with. Fine, you need fines.

But then the government made an exception for marijuana, and it left a lot of people scratching their heads back before Christmas. It's easy to understand what they thought the argument was: At the present time, the only legal users of cannabis in Ontario must have a prescription, so they drafted a medical exception at that time. On the surface, that does make sense. After all, we wouldn't stop somebody from taking heart medication or insulin in public if they actually needed it. The difference is third-party protection, in this case. If somebody injects insulin or takes heart medication on a public bus, for example, they are the only person affected by the injection or ingestion of that medication, not anybody sitting near them or standing next to them.

Second-hand smoke, however, is still a thing. If you're on a bus, in line at city hall or at a Maple Leafs game—they're red-hot lately—and somebody lights up, their action affects you too. This happens in spite of the fact that you've chosen not to partake in their activity. The law, therefore, incurs a responsibility to protect parties who don't consent. This was always going to be the case, and it's a good argument for why there never should have been an exemption granted to medical marijuana users in the first place. That's the argument for treating any marijuana like tobacco, instead of like a pharmaceutical for the purposes of public consumption and usage.

The government knew this. The Premier spent months on the campaign trail standing next to someone who was promising at almost every stop that he was going to

legalize marijuana. By the way, that same individual just brought in a federal budget that's going to have an almost-\$30-billion deficit, Mr. Speaker, so perhaps they've been standing too close to each other over the last several months, because she's starting to rub off on our new Prime Minister.

An exemption from Smoke-Free Ontario regulations for medical marijuana, in the face of the full legalization of marijuana, would have made enforcing any regulations against marijuana a legal and logistical nightmare—absolutely unmanageable. Once again, none of this was unforeseeable when the original exemption was granted. The government knew that the new federal government wanted to legalize marijuana. It knew that the province had enacted legislation in the past to protect people from second-hand smoke. The reason that it knew that is that the legislation that was drafted to protect people from the dangers of second-hand smoke is the same piece of legislation that had to be amended in order to give medicinal marijuana users this exemption in the first place.

The Ministry of Health is the largest department in the provincial government. The minister's office alone has 19 staffers, the associate minister's office has seven, and the deputy minister's office has 10.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Is that all?

Mr. Todd Smith: I know. You would think there were more. We're not talking about the bureaucrats, though; there are a lot more bureaucrats there. These are just the ministerial staff.

That we have to debate this bill to correct a bill that was hastily rushed through the Legislature, because that many adults couldn't understand that we would have to apply second-hand smoking legislation to cannabis, is pretty ridiculous, Mr. Speaker, and everybody over there knows it. As I mentioned earlier, there's a lot of egg on the faces of members of the Liberal government in response to this bill.

The story in my own riding highlights the problem with the exemption in the first place. A man got on the bus in the city of Belleville last month and proceeded to use his medical marijuana vaporizer on the bus. Because of the government's announcement, he was absolutely within the law to do that. Bill 45, passed before Christmas, allowed him to legally use that vaporizer for medicinal marijuana on the city bus in Belleville. Doesn't it seem ridiculous? It seemed ridiculous to the bus driver. He had a prescription, and he was taking public transportation because he didn't want to drive under the influence. The bus driver, who was applying more common sense to government regulation than the government apparently did in drafting it, told the man that he was violating the law and that medical marijuana was governed like cigarettes. You would think that would be the case, right? But technically, the bus driver was in the wrong for doing what only made sense.

Because the government got it wrong in the first place, this guy is legally using his vaporizer on the bus. The bus was stopped. The driver called the police. A second bus

was brought in, and the man who had used medical marijuana on the bus was told that he would not be allowed to board. He then had to walk home. He had done nothing wrong according to the law that these guys passed.

The bus driver pointed out that the city had, in total compliance with the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, as they saw it, posted signs that specifically stated, "No person shall smoke in or on city of Belleville transit property or carry a lighted cigar, cigarette, e-cigarette, pipe, other tobacco product or any other lighted smoking equipment or material while in or on transit property." That's what the sign said, not knowing that this government would, for reasons passing understanding, carve out an exemption to long-held second-hand smoking laws in the province to the benefit of a few thousand with a medical rationale for using a substance that millions of Ontarians would soon be able to use legally.

Now, there are arguments that have been made that the number of users is fairly low, and a legally inconsistent exemption doesn't actually hurt anybody. But it's a terrible law, and once marijuana usage becomes legalized, the exemption would have proven to be an unenforceable legal disaster. You would have taken that one bus in Belleville and turned it into buses and lines at Service-Ontario and public spaces right across the province.

There's a fair argument to be made that legitimate medicinal marijuana users, as opposed to potential recreational users, would want to keep any health care decision treatment where possible. That's an attitude more prevalent now that marijuana, for the time, remains illegal. I didn't get a chance to see the budget from the feds today up on Parliament Hill, so I don't know if the word "marijuana" was even mentioned in the budget today. But I will be watching the evening news to find out the highlights of the federal budget.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Good news.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'm sure, as the minister of Blue Jays games says, it was all good news today.

The puffer doesn't impact anyone else, right? Let's backtrack. Once you legalize it, you remove the stigma—we're talking about marijuana now—from it for thousands of people. Most people would think nothing of a kid with a puffer using it in public. They'd assume that the kid was having trouble breathing. But the puffer doesn't impact anyone else. We didn't enact decades of legal protections against second-hand albuterol, but we did against second-hand smoke, right?

Weighing the rights of different individuals is difficult when drafting legislation. There's always a bit of a sword-and-shield dynamic at work when you're doing this. In this case, do the rights of multiple individuals to not be subject to second-hand smoke outweigh the rights of a single individual to immediate medicinal usage? That's the complexity that we're dealing with. Admittedly, it's not really an easy question to answer, and that's why we have these debates in the Legislature.

However, the restrictions are reasonable. There are plenty of places where medical marijuana use is allowed,

and using it can be reasonably confined to those places. In the case I mentioned where the gentleman was on the bus, the guy can go to the front of the bus. He can ask for a transfer, he can get off at the next stop, he can use his medication and he get on the next bus, if he wants to.

As has been stated, though, what happens when recreational cannabis usage is legalized? What happens if, as happened here, the regulation is so poorly communicated that recreational users believe that all marijuana is exempt from regulations under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act? What happens when you've got two recreational users and a medicinal marijuana user in line at Service-Ontario or on a TTC red rocket subway train here? Who's going to ask to see a prescription at that point?

It's a pretty good question.

1700

The law is at its most effective when it's simple, when it's consistent and when it makes the broadest possible consideration for human rights, and this does so. Years of precedent in this province are consistent with the approach taken by the new piece of legislation and not the ridiculous approach that made Bill 178 necessary in the first place. I'm talking about Bill 45, which passed before Christmas.

Consequences deemed unforeseen are too often a consequence of government legislation lately. One that we spend a lot of time talking about here on this side of the House is the Green Energy Act, but we'll get into that later. You have laws that apply to some cigarettes and not others, which results in police enforcing regulations different from the ones the government drafts, because the regulations that the government has drafted contradict other legislation that the government has drafted. You have environmental laws that apply to some energy projects but not all of them, which means that a wind turbine company gets to rip down trees and tear up ground after being rejected by the government's own Environmental Review Tribunal, but if a pipeline company were to do that, they'd be before a judge before morning and the province would be seeking millions of dollars in damages.

There's a lot of legislation that this government has brought forward, and I think the intentions were good, but I think the unintended consequences haven't been dealt with properly. One of them is the Green Energy Act. At least the government in this case, with Bill 45, has realized that they stepped in a big hole. I was going to say something else, but they stepped in a big hole. They climbed out of the hole, they went back to the drawing board and they fixed it. That's why I'm going to be supporting Bill 178: because they realized that they made a mistake. They realized that they missed something during the original drafting. All of those experts over there in the ministry office didn't pick up on the mistake until the next morning, when it appeared on every newscast in town, but they realized that they made a mistake, and that's a good thing.

Why have they only done it on Bill 45? Why haven't they done it on other pieces of legislation? I have all

kinds of theories as to why they haven't done it. I think those who are paying attention probably know why they haven't done it.

When you look at what the Green Energy Act has done to the province of Ontario and when you look at the unintended consequences of the Green Energy Act, the fact that this government hasn't taken a sober second look at the Green Energy Act and made changes to it—fixed the problems that have caused electricity chaos in Ontario and that have driven manufacturers outside of the borders of Ontario to other jurisdictions—why haven't they had their Saul on the road to Damascus moment on that bill? Why have they only had that moment on this bill? Because they've messed up a lot. They've messed up a lot over the last 12 or 13 years in government. They've brought in some legislation that has done some serious damage, but they haven't gone back and fixed it.

The law is at its best when it's consistent, when it's simple and when it makes the broadest possible consideration for human rights, and this does so. It's also at its best when it applies to everybody. It's at its best when, as Aristotle said, it is reason devoid of passion. This government has to be way more careful with how it drafts laws and regulations than it has been. It has to be way more consistent with how it enforces government regulations than it has been. The most basic cause of cronyism, of which this government has been accused and guilty many times, is when the law is held to mean different things to different people.

As I've said, I will be supporting the bill. I offer no kudos to the government for needing two kicks at the can to get this one right. They knew the answer all along and tried to play fast and loose with the precedent. They knew the answer all along and chose to ignore the most obvious solution. They knew the right answer all along and decided to push through a hasty bill and draft a hasty regulation rather than actually listen to concerned opposition from members of the Legislature, from members of the public and from informed outside groups when it came to this issue.

They did this for one simple reason: arrogance. It's the arrogance of this government that is driving people across Ontario crazy. You see, Mr. Speaker, the belief that the law means different things to different people is actually the second symptom of cronyism. The first is believing that it no longer applies to you, and this government has believed that for far too long.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's a pleasure to rise and join the debate on smoke-free Ontario. As a former smoker many, many, many moons ago, I appreciate the fact that I chose to quit smoking, and I certainly don't want to be exposed to second-hand smoke, nor do I want my children exposed to it. I recognize that, as an adult, it's your decision whether or not you want to smoke, but I certainly think that those who choose not to smoke should not have to be exposed to second-hand smoke against their will.

Aside from smoking tobacco, I'd like to concentrate more on marijuana. I've had some constituents—some

are owners of medical marijuana vaping lounges; some are medical marijuana users—who have had questions around this bill and potential changes to the regulation. The questions are not so much around whether or not they can smoke their medical marijuana, something that they have been licensed and prescribed to use; they are not so much around using that in a public place, but more so whether or not they are allowed to ingest their medication when they need it—so if they're allowed to bake it into something and carry it with them so that when they need to take it, they are able to take that sitting in a restaurant, in a hockey arena or wherever that may be. There are questions around whether or not changes to regulation are going to affect that.

Apparently there is a difference between smoking marijuana and ingesting it, so those who find that smoking marijuana—medical marijuana specifically—is the best way for them to take their medicine have concerns because there's some information out there that they are not going to be able to do it in their own private residences if they are in a multi-residential type of building. So if they live in an apartment building or a townhome or a condo or a dorm, is this going to limit their ability to take their medication the way that they need to, which is by smoking?

These are questions that I'm hoping the government will be able to clarify.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from Northumberland—Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I did say I was going to be nice to my neighbour to the east, but you know what?

Mr. Arthur Potts: There's always a "but."

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I was going to change my mind, but I'll still be nice to him, Speaker. I've known the member for a long, long time.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Aren't you supposed to be arrogant, though?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Well, I don't want to be arrogant. Let them be.

Mr. Todd Smith: I didn't say you were arrogant.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you.

Speaker, as the member talked about his experiences with the vape shops in our area, I did too meet with the folks from Crazy Canuck. I thought it was kind of a weird name for—

Interjection.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Whatever. I met with some other folks in the west end of the riding—that one we talked about was in Trenton—and I met some folks in Cobourg. In some of the cases, they made sense in what they were saying. But it is a new product, and the question I've always asked, and this is to do with vaping, is, how do we know what's in those little vials? You can buy them through the Internet. We had a couple of incidents, for example, where—I'm going by the media, and of course, they're always right. It's the fact that they had a couple of accidents, where they actually blew up, and people suffered.

1710

I think that's the type of thing that we as a government and all parties need to make sure we recognize: Whatever we put the stamp of approval on through regulations or legislation here, it protects the public. That's number one.

I am delighted to hear that not just the member from Prince Edward—Hastings, but other members from both sides are prepared to support this. I think we're on the right track, so let's get it done and get it over with. Let's pass this before we actually cause some serious accidents.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to add comments in reflection upon what the member from Prince Edward—Hastings shared with us today.

It was interesting, I found, that he referenced the Green Energy Act. He specifically pointed out the unintended consequences, but since he brought it up, I need to reflect on it a little bit. I might suggest that we can never forget that in 2009, this government across the floor totally stripped municipal autonomy away. I would suggest that some of the steps that went into the Liberal Green Energy Act were absolutely intended, and we have to hold this government to account.

That is where we look to what they have done on this particular bill. In terms of Bill 178, we held this government to account. From the moment it was introduced, we knew they were off base. For goodness' sake, even the next day, the Premier was on record saying, "What?" She doesn't want to sit in a restaurant or in a movie theatre beside somebody who is smoking. It just goes to reinforce how in the backroom, things are happening that not everybody agrees with.

So I'm glad that this government actually admitted to one of their mistakes and has come forward with a bill to clean up the mess that they've made—and I would suggest that they don't stop with Bill 178. I would suggest they need to take a look at Bill 100, and I'm very glad to hear that our critic for tourism, culture and sport is working with the minister to clarify some sections within Bill 100 to make up for a lack of consultation. Again, so many mistakes come from this lack of consultation. This government just doesn't care about it, and it would be an area that has room for improvement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to add to the debate from my colleague the member from Prince Edward—Hastings. I appreciated the information. He was quite concise and thorough. Kudos to you, sir.

I think he hit on the nucleus of the debate here, which is that the government made a mistake in the original version of the bill. Hindsight being 20/20, they carved out some more legislative time to fix some of their mistakes, which is a failure in and of itself. Can they not get it right the first time?

I want to relate a story that my colleague from Windsor West was talking about. There are proprietors of

vaping lounges in Essex county—there's one in Windsor now—who have made substantial investments into a facility, a private business, to be able to accommodate those who are medicinal marijuana holders and who want a venue to be able to not only talk and socialize, but also to at whatever given point ingest their medicine.

That's what we have to regard it as now, Speaker. My dad has been a diabetic for 50 years, and I've watched him many times, in the middle of a public space, having to give himself a shot of insulin. That has potentially offended some people; when you pull a needle out and shove it into your leg in the middle of nowhere, it's a little bit of a weird thing if you're not used to it.

This is a new concept as well: folks who are ingesting medicinal marijuana for whatever their ailment requires. I don't know how the government is regarding other aspects of the ingestion of marijuana, whether it's edible or otherwise; these are questions that still loom. But all said, their failure has now cost one of the business proprietors in Windsor a substantial amount of money because they didn't get it right the first time. Who knows what the future of his business is going to be going forward?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Prince Edward-Hastings for final comments.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the other members of the Legislature who are bringing comments on Bill 178 this afternoon.

The members from Essex and Windsor West raised some very important concerns when it comes to proprietors of businesses, business owners, that have started up.

The member from Northumberland-Quinte West spoke about the Stinky Canuck—I think he called it the Crazy Canuck; it's actually called the Stinky Canuck—in Quinte West, in his riding, in Trenton, that I have visited, as he did, which has invested a lot of money into their business, and they're doing things properly. They're not allowing young people in to purchase these e-cigarettes or vaporizers.

He posed the question—and it's a good question. He said, "What about the dangers of these vials of juices or these types of things that are used in the vaporizers and the e-cigarettes?" But the point I want to make on that issue is that we don't have to ban everything. That's why we have regulations. That's why we have inspection agencies that can say, "Okay, this stuff that's coming from China or Mexico or wherever it's coming from that doesn't pass the test? You can't sell that in Ontario." It has to meet certain regulations or requirements and you can sell it in Ontario, because it's not going to cause any problems because it's been inspected by a certified agency.

Those are the types of things that we should be doing; not outright banning things, especially when there are so many success stories when it comes to the cessation that people have experienced, in getting off the habit of smoking very harmful cigarettes, whether they're legal or contraband cigarettes. These tools are working.

I want to commend my colleague the member from Huron-Bruce as well for bringing up the fact that there's just not enough consultation. The government is ramming things down our throats without thorough consultation. That's why we're running into the problem that we're experiencing today with Bill 178.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's always great to get up in the Legislature and talk about our constituency issues. These kinds of bills give us the opportunity to talk about our constituents and talk about our municipalities and agencies in our riding.

This particular bill, Bill 178, is really an amendment to Bill 45, and it does something very simple: It extends the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to include prescribed products and substances. Under this legislation, anywhere you can't smoke a cigarette, you won't be able to vape and you won't be able to smoke medical marijuana. This includes public spaces, schools, common areas in apartments, restaurants, child care centres, arenas—you name a public space or an enclosed workplace; you won't be able to smoke. More recently, some municipalities have even extended the no-smoking bylaw to include public parks.

That brings to my mind the question—and the member from St. Catharines will know about this. We have the marijuana day in Niagara Falls every year that brings hundreds of people to Niagara Falls. So the question will become, I guess, whether they will be able to continue with that festival.

Workers in certain industries are more at risk than others, and so this legislation extends the obligation to make sure that employers are complying with the legislation, which is kind of a problem with this government because we don't have enough enforcement around a lot of other issues—the ESA and under workers' compensation and under the Labour Relations Act. We often hear from constituents about the lack of enforcement. So this is another place where we're going to make sure that we have the people in place to actually do the enforcement.

The bill will extend the authority of inspectors employed by public health units to enter, without warrant and at a reasonable time, any place where it is prohibited to smoke or light a prescribed product or substance.

As vaping and medical marijuana use increases, this legislation will seek to limit exposure to second-hand smoke.

1720

In broad strokes, New Democrats support this bill and we'll certainly be waiting to hear from the stakeholders as to any amendments that may improve the bill, like some of the issues that our members raised here today in debate.

According to the World Health Organization, tobacco has an annual death toll of six million people. That could exceed eight million by 2030. As well as causing lung cancer and chronic respiratory diseases, it's also a major

contributor to heart disease in many people—the world's number one killer.

Many individuals are using vaping—e-cigarettes—as a smoking cessation tool. Vaping is thought to give individuals wanting to give up smoking the ability to do so without eliminating the stimulant nicotine or the behavioural habits of smoking. In fact, people can wean themselves off nicotine as well during that process, because many of these vapor juices that people talk about have varying levels of nicotine in them. You could start out with a percentage—I think 18 milligrams is the maximum—and wean yourself down to zero nicotine.

I can tell you that my husband recently, in January, quit smoking. He went off to the vapor store and got himself a vapor. This was a guy who was smoking a pack a day. So in two months, he has not smoked about 60 packs of cigarettes and is only using this vapor thing two or three times a day. That is it. He's still on his first bottle of juice. So I'm very proud of him.

Interjection.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Oh, I need to—excuse me, Speaker. I forgot to seek unanimous consent to stand down the NDP lead.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Unanimous consent to stand down the NDP lead? Agreed? Carried.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you so much.

I'm very proud of him because he's actually almost been able to kick this habit.

Those who use e-cigarettes find that they're a cheaper, cleaner alternative, and they're certainly far better than cigarettes that are loaded with tar and toxins. Unfortunately, there's a lack of evidence because vapers haven't been around that long to actually determine whether or not there are any harmful effects from using those vapers, but the impact surely has to be less than smoking a pack of cigarettes a day.

While I was mayor, I was involved with all of this smoke-free stuff. I sat on regional council, and I can remember that the world was going to fall in because we were passing these smoking bylaws. I personally think that, at the time, as opposed to transitioning it in municipality by municipality, it probably should have been something that the provincial government took on. It should have been done in one fell swoop because it caused a lot of problems between local Legions, bars and casinos versus restaurants. I can tell you that as I sat on regional council, I think over a two-week period we probably heard from a hundred or more proponents about how they were going to lose their businesses if we implemented this. Eventually the bylaw was passed, first to stop smoking in some public places, and then eventually that got extended out to the casinos and Legions and all of those other places so that everybody was on a level playing field.

The problem was that a lot of restaurants at the time were given the option that if they could have a separate smoking place in their restaurant, they would comply with the legislation.

I just want to do a shout-out to my friends John and Barry at Cheers restaurant in Welland because they were one of those proponents who probably spent \$50,000 to \$100,000 renovating their restaurant so that they had a smoking area and a non-smoking area. They have the best fish and chips in town, I can tell you, the best halibut, the best haddock.

Interjections.

Ms. Cindy Forster: They have chicken wings as well.

Anyway, they spent a lot of money because of this transition for the smoking bylaw. After a couple of years, the law changed and they couldn't have smoking at all, even in their bar section, so they were out a lot of money and a lot of investment when it all could have been accomplished in the first legislation.

Every day, my constituency staff get emails and phone calls about medical marijuana in the riding. Issues around access are problematic, and around the cost of medical marijuana. Specifically, many in our lower-income communities, those on OW and ODSP, who rely on medical marijuana for pain management or seizures, can't access it because it comes with a crushing financial burden. Unfortunately, it isn't on the pharmaceutical list of the province, so many people either don't have access to it or they have to trade that off for food or heat in their house.

I've heard from a number of constituents about how much their quality of life has actually improved since they've been on medical marijuana. There was one gentleman I spoke to not that long ago who was on four different pain medications, from fentanyl patches and OxyContin to oxycodone to hydromorphone. He is now off of all of those medications and is just vaping medical marijuana as he needs it, and he says that his quality of life has improved dramatically.

We now have the first cannabis clinic in St. Catharines, in Niagara, focusing on patients who don't get relief from traditional methods of medicine for their pain control. Ronan Levy is the director, and he says that the general feedback he has received is that that clinic has been a life-changer for many who are thankful to the clinic for the help they have provided to many in the riding.

I think there are, to date, about 600 patients whom they've seen in the first six months. Those 600 patients were referred by as many as 130 physicians across the Niagara region. Chronic pain is the most common problem that medical marijuana is ordered for, but we all know that with chronic pain come anxiety, depression and insomnia because of the chronic pain. I think this clinic is doing a great job in Niagara; I know that there are some in other municipalities across the province as well.

Niagara public health—I sat on their social services and public health committee over the years—have a number of programs. One is STOP on the Road, a smoking cessation program delivered by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health here in Toronto and the Niagara public health department, and it's a program that

helps people deal with cessation treatment in our communities. It is part of a nicotine replacement program, with a five-week workshop, so it isn't just, "Here's your patch. Stick it on, get on with life and stop smoking. You're strong; you can do it." We all know that smoking is an addiction, not unlike alcoholism, overeating and substance abuse. All of those things are addictions, and so is smoking.

I can remember not that long ago, just 30 years ago, when I worked in the hospital: Nurses and doctors were smoking at the desk. Doctors were going on patient rounds and seeing their patients while dangling a cigarette between their fingers. Imagine the sickest patient you were caring for in the intensive care unit, and your nurse, coming back, has just finished smoking a cigarette or two. That smell, when you are so sick, critically ill, nauseated and having to be looked after by people who were smoking—of which I was one—when you think today of how far we've moved, it is so good for the patients and for the people who have had to quit smoking.

My smoking cessation was the smoke shacks that all of the hospitals built outside of their hospital. You didn't even want to go in them because the nicotine and the tar was hanging on the walls of these shacks. You could have as many as 50 people in there at once having a cigarette. I went once and I quit smoking immediately after that first visit.

I wanted to spend a couple of minutes talking about smoking and its relationship to dental health, because I have a very strong advocacy group in my riding of Welland through the Bridges Community Health Centre. We all know that oral health can lead to all kinds of medical problems. Smoking, whether it's marijuana or whether it's cigarettes, can lead to poor oral health as well.

1730

The Bridges Community Health Centre in my community supports clients in Fort Erie, Port Colborne and Wainfleet. They focus on the needs of low-income children and families. They recently spearheaded a regional dental health coalition relationship in partnership with Quest Niagara Falls and the Centre de santé. It is made up of a diverse group of stakeholders whose main focus is to expand publicly funded dental programs for adults and seniors with low incomes.

To talk about seniors' stories from the riding—I'm happy to have the opportunity to speak a little bit to that today. Rhonda Barron is actually the person who leads this up. She provides me with the reports and invites me regularly to her meetings. She says that one in every five Canadians avoids visiting a dentist because they can't afford it: 2.3 million Canadians cannot afford a visit to a dental office. I mean, imagine, if you go for one cleaning in a year, it's \$200. People on Ontario Works and ODSP can't afford that. But the important piece of this is that 61,000 visits to hospital emergency rooms in 2014 were because of oral health problems.

Rhonda actually just sent me an email before I came down here today. She said that in Niagara alone, 1,900

people visited an emergency room with dental pain and infection, leading to costly health care of approximately \$1 million, because they didn't have their dental needs looked after. I relate this back to smoking being one of the causes of some oral diseases. Imagine if that \$1 million in Niagara—and I don't know how many millions of dollars it would be across the province—was actually sent directly to make sure that adults also have appropriate dental care in this province. It would free up the staff in the emergency departments. It would free up the doctors in the emergency departments. People would actually get their dental care looked at. It would be preventive and it would be so much better than the system that we currently have.

The evidence says that there is one ER visitor every nine minutes in Canada because of oral health issues. In 2012, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care set up health links, with one goal being to reduce avoidable ER visits. Well, here's one way that they could reduce it: by just putting in a program that gave low-income adults, in addition to all children, free dental care. Then they wouldn't be visiting the emergency department.

I've just got three minutes left, so I wanted just to go back to the people who called my office about not having access to medical marijuana. Some of them have to go to the streets to buy a product because it is cheaper to do that, in many cases, than it is to pay for it through the medical marijuana program.

I want to relate that back to a short story, a personal story of my own. I had purchased a farm in Wainfleet, in the rural part of my riding, at one point. We were thinking about building a house on that property. It had about 40 acres. It had an apple orchard and some crops that Young Sod Farms would put in. I had tenants for about five years; they had come from New Brunswick. I really never saw those tenants other than when they signed their lease. They would come in every month and they would pay their rent. I think he was a truck driver and she was a school bus driver. They had a teenaged daughter. For four or five years, they lived there. They'd come every month and they'd bring the rent in. There were never any issues or any problems.

Then one day, they moved out without telling me. They just kind of said, "We're leaving. You've got my last month's rent." I went out and kind of cleaned the place up and I rented out to the next set of tenants. Those tenants were a lovely couple of a religious background. They belonged to the Faith Tabernacle Church in my riding.

About two days into their living out there at the farm, they called me and they said, "You'll never guess what we found here on the farm property." I said, "Oh, what was that?" They said, "We found marijuana plants." And I said, "How many?" And they said, "Oh, about three dozen." I said, "Where did you find them?" "We found them in the apple orchard." I said, "What did you do with them?" They said that they burnt them. They had a fire and burned them. My response was, "I hope you didn't stand too close to the fire."

These illegal kinds of things happen, and they happen a lot—you would know that—in rural communities, where people have grow-ops in their houses or they have grow-ops on farms—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Cornfields.

Ms. Cindy Forster:—and in their cornfields. This one just happened to be in the apple orchard.

People who are on low incomes have to sometimes resort to buying their drugs illegally, and that shouldn't be the case. If your doctor prescribes medical marijuana for you, there should be some way in the system that you can get that drug because the cost probably is less expensive than being on four or five different medications for the rest of your life to try and address the issue of pain control.

I'm happy to have had the opportunity to speak to this. I wish that this amendment didn't have to happen and that this had been dealt with and that people had been consulted to start with so that we didn't have to be dealing with this here again today. But it's always great to be able to get up and talk about the folks in your riding and how various pieces of legislation affect the quality or non-quality of their lives.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It's always a pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents in Cambridge to add a few comments to the debate.

I wanted to relate to the member from Welland's experience with being in a hospital with physicians and nurses smoking in the hallways and smoking in their offices. When I started at the Hospital for Sick Children way back in the early 1980s, we actually had a smoking room on every ward. These are including some of our very vulnerable small children with severe asthma. So it was rather horrifying for me.

I raised a child with severe respiratory complications and disease who narrowly avoided a lung transplant in the early 1990s, when he was about age 13. I can tell you, Speaker, that he was subject to issues with any smoke, whether it be from tobacco, wood fires—any kind of smoke would bother his lungs. That's why I really feel that this bill would protect those who react to any kind of environmental issues with smoke involved.

I am very supportive of adding other substances, including medical marijuana, to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, Mr. Speaker. It would prevent those who are using medical marijuana from doing so in an enclosed space with others present, in a car with children and in an enclosed space where somebody may react to it. So I am supportive of that.

Although, certainly, those needing medical marijuana for pain control and other issues should be able to consume these products, I feel very strongly that they should be outside and not exposing any other folks to the second-hand smoke.

Again, I'm very supportive that we do make those changes in the legislation, that we pass this legislation and protect all of our public from the issues of second-hand smoke.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from Northumberland—Quinte West

Mr. Todd Smith: No, you're wrong. That's my little friend over there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Forgive me. I should have known that it's Prince Edward—Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: My twin brother from Northumberland—Quinte West.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to bring some comments on the remarks by the member from Welland, who brings a couple of different perspectives, being a former mayor of Welland, of course, and a nurse. So there was the business perspective and there was the health perspective. She made a lot of very fine remarks during her presentation here this afternoon.

1740

I think we all agree, Mr. Speaker, that smoking is bad. If we can end smoking, then let's end smoking, right? Let's do what we can. Members from all three parties have brought forward legislation to try to get people to kick the habit, whether it's cracking down on contraband cigarettes or the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, which the government has brought forward; and I know there have been a number of pieces of private members' legislation that have come from the members of the third party as well. We all agree that smoking is bad and we should do what we can to wipe out smoking.

There has been a lot of talk about vaporizers and e-cigarettes and the effects that those devices have had in helping people kick the habit that, in many cases, they have had for decades. They have spent tens of thousands of dollars on cigarettes over their lives. Then they get this magical device called a vaporizer or an e-cigarette, and the next thing you know, they have kicked this lifelong habit.

I remember talking to one person at the Stinky Canuck in Northumberland—Quinte West. He had been smoking for 40 years, and he told me that after using this device for a month or so, he could taste his food again. He actually hadn't tasted his food for decades, and he forgot what it tasted like to have a hamburger.

I wouldn't condone having a hamburger every day, because that's not good for your health, either.

Mr. John Yakabuski: We assume you've had a few of them.

Mr. Todd Smith: I have had a few hamburgers over the years, though; you're right.

But anyway, the government is finally on the right track. They are correcting their mistakes, and this amendment is a good thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Once upon a time, in a land far, far away—actually, it wasn't that long ago, but it was out in British Columbia, which isn't all that far away, either—you would be taking a walk in the woods and you would see somebody planting or, depending on the

season, harvesting a crop. At the time, it was BC bud. Then when I moved to Leamington, a town you're familiar with, where Point Pelee National Park is, I remember marijuana growing wild in those days in the park. You're not allowed to pull a plant or pick up a stone in the national park, but every now and then, you would see a Volkswagen van or something going out with all these twigs sticking out the window, and you knew what was going on.

So when the member for Welland talked about renting a piece of farm property out in an apple orchard and somebody finding three dozen or more marijuana plants, it happens.

I know in parts of Essex county, wild marijuana still grows along some creeks and streams. I mean, it happens. I know in your community in Chatham-Kent, I remember as a reporter covering stories with the OPP up in the plane, with their radar, their infrared—whatever it was—zooming down into the cornfields. They could see on the radar, on the TV screen, the flares that they would get in the cornfields where somebody—unless it was Jack and the beanstalk—was growing marijuana.

It still happens today, and it's going to happen for a long time. If that's where some people have to go to get their medical marijuana, they will do that if the cost is too high elsewhere. I think the member from Welland made that point. Especially with her nursing background, she knows what's going on in her community and some of the effects of this bill.

Thank you for your time, and they all lived happily ever after.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much for that once-upon-a-time story.

Further questions and comments?

Mr. Granville Anderson: I am honoured to speak to this bill this afternoon.

The irony of it is last week, I went to visit—I don't know if it's called a farm—a marijuana facility in my riding in Bowmanville. It's called Mettrum. I visited it, and it was heavily secured. They had various farms and various types of marijuana plants. I didn't know much about it, but there were different types. They were for medicinal purposes.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Why is he laughing so much over there?

Mr. Granville Anderson: I guess maybe it's the fumes from the plant. No, I'm just kidding.

It was funny how they went through the process. They had different grades, and it was all labelled. They had a special amount for kids and for adults, different strengths and all of that stuff. That was really my first real interaction with marijuana, believe it or not.

Mr. John Yakabuski: When was your most recent?

Mr. Granville Anderson: Yes, my most recent, if you want to call it that.

Anyhow, finally, in addition to providing a framework for the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to regulate substances other than tobacco, this legislation ensures that the rules

with regard to enforcement and employer and proprietor responsibilities are making sure the powers are more in place to further protect Ontarians from exposure to second-hand smoke, which, as we know, is a killer. Also, I've seen that interaction during workers' compensation claims, where there is a determination whether it was exposure to other substances or second-hand smoke, so I know the dangers of second-hand smoke from my other life experience.

This bill, in addition to regulatory amendments that would follow, if passed, are intended to provide reasonable and precautionary safeguards for Ontarians from exposure to second-hand medical marijuana smoke, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I want to thank the member from Durham for taking this discussion on marijuana to a higher level.

Back to the member from Welland for final comments.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thanks to the members from Cambridge, Prince Edward-Hastings, Windsor-Tecumseh and Durham for their comments.

I want to get back into that little story that I told you about my tenants. After we heard from the new tenants about the marijuana plants that they burned, we went out there and had a look and found about 30 bales of fertilized potting soil and we found grow-op lights. So I think that they were planning on expanding their business, except that they must have thought the police were on to them. They bailed in the middle of the night and moved back to New Brunswick.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Save the bales.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Save the bales, yes. So I had some good potting soil that year to plant flowers and whatever, yes.

I think that whole message of the illegal piece is that the more we do to make sure that people who need to use medical marijuana—and I understand that there are about 30,000 people across the country who are using medical marijuana—have access and they have the financial means to actually access it. For people who are low-income that really need to use that, there should be some funding model available for them. The more we do that, I think the more we push out the illegal growing and the illegal selling. That, in itself, will reduce crime across this province and across the country.

Anything we can do to reduce second-hand smoke—because we all have a friend or a family member who never smoked in their life who is either suffering from COPD or has died from lung cancer because they worked in a restaurant or they worked in a bar or they worked in a casino. So I think that this bill, along with the original Bill 45, will go a long way to protect the health of many people who live in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the member from Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to see that you are remembering my home riding.

I'm very pleased to add my voice this afternoon to our discussion on the Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act. I

do so on behalf of the residents of Kitchener Centre. I'm going to be sharing my time with the member for Newmarket–Aurora and with the Chair of Cabinet.

With so many things, it's really important for our laws and our regulations to adapt quickly to modern life. This bill shows that we're doing exactly that. The Smoke-Free Ontario Act is going to serve every day to protect our health for people throughout the province.

We see the changes surrounding smoking, the need to expand the act's no-smoking provisions to just beyond tobacco. This legislation is going to help us to add medical marijuana to the no-smoking rules.

What exactly does that mean? You've heard members on this side of the House talk about some of the rules surrounding this. Smoking and vaping medical marijuana is going to be prohibited in places like enclosed public spaces and workplaces, in schools, in child care centres and where private home daycare is provided, and in vehicles where children under 16 are present. All of this makes perfect sense, doesn't it?

The intent here is to safeguard our communities and our children and to limit the public health risk that second-hand smoke can cause. We need to ensure that our regulations do continue to protect public health as medical marijuana becomes more common.

1750

Mr. Speaker, it's really remarkable when you start to track the trajectory that we have been on for the past 25 years, when you look at how we're handling smoking in workplaces and in public places. I want to share a story with you. In the late 1980s, I was involved in an effort in my workplace to try and get smoking banned. I look back on this and remember how people used to smoke at their desks. It's astonishing. I will tell you that it was no easy feat. I joined with a couple of other co-workers who felt that this was very unhealthy for our workplace. We were armed with all kinds of information. The experts at that time, even in the 1980s, were telling us how unhealthy smoking and second-hand smoke were. But this was a time before we had laws protecting us in the workplace.

I want to tell you what motivated me to actually join this gang of rabble-rousers as we approached our management. I was expecting my first child, and I think I was at about the six- or seven-month mark in my pregnancy. I was sitting just a few feet away from a chain smoker. It was very unpleasant. Smoking bothered me before, but while I was pregnant, it was especially challenging to try to get through the day with a smoker sitting so close to me. This was an open-concept room in a television newsroom, so you couldn't escape it.

As the 6 p.m. deadline came closer every afternoon, the smokers seemed to light up with greater urgency, feeling the pressure of the deadline approaching. By the end of the afternoon, there was this grey haze along the ceiling in the newsroom. It was quite unpleasant.

But it became a very contentious fight. We made our case—our little group—to management and to the health and safety committee, and we did so on a foundation of sound medical research. Finally, we managed to convince

management to ban smoking in our workplace. Then a few years later, you saw it happening across the province. But I'll tell you, it would have been a lot easier had we had legislation at the time.

So, Mr. Speaker, we now see different substances in different uses being smoked and vaped, and we need to stay ahead of the curve and ensure that our regulations do protect all Ontarians. Many people might be asking themselves, "Why do we even need this amendment?" Well, under the current legislation, it was working; however, the number of people who are now using medical marijuana—we see this is on the increase.

In December of last year—you've heard reference to this—the exceptions proposed for medical marijuana users sparked a public debate. We wanted businesses to have the option of choosing whether or not they wanted to deal with medical marijuana in the workplace. But since then, many people and many businesses have told us that they're looking for clarity on the use of medical marijuana and that there is a desire for consistency. So we listened and we are adapting to those suggestions. With the federal government's commitment to legalizing marijuana, it's critical that we do ensure controls are in place to protect public health.

This bill is going to help protect Ontarians from a public health risk. This bill is going to ensure that our children are safeguarded against second-hand smoke. This bill looks toward the future, and I urge my colleagues to support the amendment.

I wish that we had had things like this back in the 1980s, when I was making the fight and trying to grow a healthy baby. I will say, though, that the baby is now 28 years old, and he's in very good health.

This is a very excellent bill, and I encourage all of my colleagues to vote in favour of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm honoured to be able to speak to the Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act this afternoon. I think it's an exceptionally important piece of legislation.

If I may just reminisce for a minute, I've heard stories from a number of members in the House today about the effects of second-hand smoke and smoking in their lives. For me, I go back to my grandfather, who started smoking when he was 13 years old and working in a shop, on the shop floor, as an apprentice, and who continued to smoke unfiltered, hand-rolled cigarettes his entire life until he died in his early eighties.

So one might ask: What threat could cigarettes possibly pose if you've smoked from the time you're 13 until your death in your early eighties? It's a good question. But, Mr. Speaker, if you had met my grandfather when he was in his early fifties and seen the ravages of emphysema, you would understand what an exceptionally unpleasant life that gentleman had for the last 30 years, where every breath he took was a fight as he battled emphysema. He eventually died of a number of different cancers, most of them related to smoking. So

in the end, those cigarettes got him, but it took 30 years of awful living to get there.

As a 12-year-old boy watching his grandfather die of emphysema, and later, cancer, it made an indelible impression that smoking really wasn't a very smart thing to do. In fact, I don't think my parents ever told me not to smoke. I just had to think about what Grandfather Ballard went through. Frankly, no sane person would touch a cigarette after watching what he went through. I use that to set up where I'm coming from with the Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act.

Just to recap, the proposed legislation would expand the scope of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act so that the no-smoking rule will apply to products or substances other than tobacco—because unlike my grandfather's era, there is a lot more than tobacco that people can ingest by smoking now. The act was created to support efforts to reduce the prevalence of tobacco use in Ontario, and I think it's a fantastic piece of legislation. It aims to protect the health of the people of Ontario by regulating the sale, supply, distribution, promotion and smoking of tobacco products in Ontario, but because the Smoke-Free Ontario Act only applies to tobacco, as we've heard every other speaker say, there are few rules around smoking other products or substances, like medical marijuana.

Our government believes the time has come to expand the Smoke-Free Ontario Act so that it enables the government to include products and substances other than tobacco to be subject to its no-smoking provisions.

With the help of this legislation, the government can prescribe through regulation medical marijuana as one of the products or substances that are subject to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act's no-smoking rule. This would mean that smoking medical marijuana or holding a lighted medical marijuana product or substance would be prohibited in enclosed places—in a motor vehicle where a person under the age of 16 years old is present.

I think I will leave it there. I will turn the floor over to the chairman of the board.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. I recognize the deputy House leader.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was listening to some of the interventions that have been taking place from across the House about changing people's minds on things. I just wanted to remind you, in case you had not had the opportunity to read this, that there was a column by R. Michael Warren in the Toronto Star on March 21 entitled, "Will the Real Patrick Brown Please Stand Up?"

The reason I mention that is I know my friend from Belleville, for instance, said in the House that this was a change of heart or a change of position on the part of the government. If there are any changes taking place, my gosh, the changes are certainly outlined in this particular column in the Toronto Star. I commend it to you and to all the people of this province. It appeared on March 21, 2016.

I won't go into the details of it because it uses some language that would not be permitted in this House, and

you know I would not want to do that in reference to the leader of the Conservative Party—other than to say this: This legislation is very good. The member for Pembroke—Barry's Bay, sorry—said this bill is quite simple. It's a small bill. It should be able to proceed quickly in this House. Therefore, I won't be compelled, as deputy government House leader, to impose what's called a time allocation motion because the opposition has said this is a very simple bill that can pass quickly.

With that, I know you're going to cut me down, even though I still have about nine minutes left. I know you're probably looking at the clock and saying it's close to 6 of the clock. So I'll let you say that, and I'll be prepared to come back and complete my remarks.

1800

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much, deputy House leader. I appreciate the fact that you eventually brought your discussion back to the bill that was being debated.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

WIND TURBINES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Energy. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please.

The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister—in this case, the parliamentary assistant—may reply for up to five minutes.

I now turn the period over to the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Our community has had its fair share of wind and solar projects. During my time as mayor of South Glengarry, we saw three large, approximately 100-acre solar farms and numerous smaller FIT solar projects undertaken in our township, with no municipal planning control or say in where or how these were located. They were sometimes just a mess.

Some of these installations are stuck in places where they shouldn't be. With no municipal input, there is no control. In South Glengarry, they overhang property lines, block sight lines, and are put up in front of houses and at the road, where they're a real eyesore. It's unfortunate, for if the location had been subject to some type of local input, they could have been moved just a short distance to at least make them a little more pleasing and a lot more practical.

To highlight the extreme lack of co-operation the local municipalities received from these large, mainly foreign companies, I'll recount my experience in the township. On reading about an open house being held in the city of Cornwall concerning a large solar farm being built in our township, the first we had seen or even heard of it, I asked our planner to contact the company, identify us as the host township and suggest that they might hold at least one meeting in our township.

We were basically told to buzz off, until, I assume, they later verified that although the property had a Cornwall mailing address, it was actually in South Glengarry, and by the terms of the contract or the application, they would have to hold a meeting in our township. That shows the lack of consultation we used to receive, and today we see the same in North Stormont. It has changed very little.

I attended one of the information sessions in Crysler this past summer, and witnessed the overwhelming wishes of the local residents of North Stormont, later confirmed by the township council when they voted to be an unwilling host. This was not a simple decision made without consequences, for the company had offered the township some serious money if they would pass a resolution identifying themselves as a willing host.

The council took the Liberal government at its word that the local municipalities would be heard, and they turned down \$450,000 for 20 years, a total of \$9 million, plus approximately \$4 million in property taxes over the term of the contract. The evidence is clear: The residents and the council of North Stormont were not willing hosts.

Now they find that they are the latest victim of just another broken Liberal promise. They are getting the wind turbines, but without the \$9 million. It might be different if we actually needed the power, but as we can see from the Auditor General's report, we are producing enough excess power each year to power Nova Scotia for five years.

The 2015 Auditor General's report highlighted that as a result of Liberal mismanagement between 2006 and 2014, the people of Ontario have been overcharged \$37 billion for electricity. What's more, ratepayers will continue to be overcharged another \$133 billion over the next 18 years, resulting in a total of \$170 billion in unnecessary costs to the ratepayers—just unbelievable.

We are paying way too much for this renewable energy. In fact, the auditor reported that in 2014, we were paying double the price for wind and three and a half times more for solar than our American neighbours. Winning a power contract from this government is like winning the lottery, and when the people of Ontario are paying the bill, it's just another way this Liberal government is making life unaffordable and our businesses uncompetitive.

Speaker, can we ask the minister to intervene and follow through on the government's commitment to listen to the people of North Stormont, who clearly designated themselves as unwilling hosts, and cancel the wind turbine project in North Stormont?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Bob Delaney: The announcement made by the Independent Electricity System Operator, or IESO, earlier this month, on March 10, regarding competitive renewable energy procurement is a significant step forward for Ontario's energy system. This is the result of hard work to develop a process to enable renewable energy generation at competitive prices across Ontario.

There were 16 contracts announced for solar, wind and hydroelectric power, representing more than 454 megawatts of clean, renewable energy capacity. Ontario's 2013 long-term energy plan established a clear goal of 10,700 megawatts of wind, solar and bioenergy online by 2021 and 9,300 megawatts of hydroelectricity online by 2025. This procurement will contribute to the achievement of the province's renewable energy targets and to securing a future in clean, reliable and affordable electricity in Ontario.

In addition to achieving the lowest contracted prices for renewable energy, there are great achievements in support for these projects. More than 80% of the projects include participation from one or more aboriginal communities, including five projects offering aboriginal communities more than 50% equity participation. More than 75% of the successful proposals received support from local municipalities, and more than 60% had support from neighbouring residents.

The member for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry talked about some of his concerns. I'd like to address some of those concerns and explain the process.

The Ministry of Energy changed the procurement of large renewable projects based on the concerns of municipalities and the lessons learned from the large feed-in tariff or FIT projects that were previously procured.

The Independent Electricity System Operator, or IESO, has developed a new, competitive process to provide municipalities, First Nations and Métis communities and the general public with a greater opportunity to participate in the development of renewable energy projects. Between July 2013 and February 2014, the IESO undertook an engagement process with the public, municipalities, First Nation and Métis communities and other groups on the design of the Large Renewable Procurement Program.

This Large Renewable Procurement, led by the IESO, included mandatory new requirements that focused on engaging with the local community and receiving feedback. In designing and launching Large Renewable Procurement, the IESO was guided by the principles from the province's 2013 long-term energy plan. Just to remind the member, they are as follows:

- to follow a provincial and/or regional electricity system need;

- to consider municipal electricity generation preferences;

- to engage early and regularly with local and First Nation and Métis communities;

- to occur in multiple successive rounds, providing opportunity for a diverse set of participants; and

- to identify clear procurement needs, goals and expectations.

The requirements were designed to strike a balance between early community engagement and achieving value for ratepayers.

Large Renewable Procurement projects proposed through this process must have demonstrated site and resource due diligence, as well as engagement with the communities in which they propose to locate. That means that in the member's region, proponents held public meetings, met with the municipality, and worked individually with local residents and property owners to ensure all of the information about the project was known up front. Evidence of any or all of the above would raise the probability of a project ahead of other projects that did not show such participation or support, depending on the prices bid for each project.

Regardless of whether municipalities pass resolutions to indicate their willingness or unwillingness to host projects, Large Renewable Procurement project proponents were and are required to engage with municipalities and to take into account local needs and considerations before proposals are submitted. Every project offered a contract by the IESO met all mandatory requirements of the requests for proposals. The IESO and the ministry listened to municipal concerns about the way large feed-in tariff projects were being procured, and the ministry made a commitment to address those concerns in the new process. The goal was to provide municipalities with a stronger role going forward, but not to provide a veto.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would like to thank the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy for your comments and replies.

It is now 6:10. This Legislature stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1810.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
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Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
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Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
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McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
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Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

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No. 152

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
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(Hansard)**

Wednesday 23 March 2016

Mercredi 23 mars 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 23 March 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 23 mars 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT LA LOI FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO SANS FUMÉE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 22, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 178, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act / Projet de loi 178, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I am proud to stand today and have the leadoff for Bill 178, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, as we begin second reading of this bill. I'm sure we'll hear quite a bit of good discussion going forward and take this bill to committee, and have quite a few deputations so that we can come out with a bill that's suitable for the people of Ontario.

Interjection: Good morning.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Good morning to you.

In preparing for this bill, I've really noticed how much we've changed over the last 20 years with regard to smoking. I remember back in the late 1970s, I was eight or nine years old, and on Sundays I would go to my father's pharmacy and do odd jobs just to hang out with my dad, listen to the baseball game and learn about the business. One of the tasks he gave me was taking the great big ashtray, near where people dropped off the prescriptions, and cleaning it. It was chock full of butts from people. It was amazing at the time: You're in a pharmacy, a health facility, giving medication to people to make them healthy, and you're allowed to smoke while you're waiting for your prescription.

That's something that's burned in my memory, because I really can't stand smoking. It doesn't sit right with me. It really irritates my sinuses. The fact that it was 30-some-odd years ago—and the pages never lived through this; you missed that, I guess, if that's excitement for you. But 30-some years ago you were allowed to smoke inside buildings, and waiting for your doctor, you'd have a cigarette.

It's really interesting: My family doctor smokes. I do remember going to his building, and he and his staff would be smoking in the side room before they came to see you. He would just stink of smoke when he would come and check my blood pressure and stuff.

Another aspect I remember is, in the 1990s I went to Poland; we had a family trip to Poland. I flew LOT Airlines, which was the Polish airline. You had to request a smoking or non-smoking seat in an airplane. So at the back of the plane you were allowed to smoke; in the front of the plane, you were fine. I just find it really interesting that we didn't think the second-hand smoke would just drift to the front of the plane anyway. When you have a lot of nervous flyers, they smoke an awful lot to help maintain their nerve. It was a terrible flight: nine hours there, with people smoking in the plane, and nine hours coming home.

The other thing that the pages won't ever get to experience, thankfully, I remember in my twenties going to the bars at night.

Hon. David Zimmer: What?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Yes, I did that in my twenties. I kind of cut back after I got married, but in my twenties I'd go to the bars.

In the morning, you'd wake up and you would just stink of smoke. It was unbelievable. People smoked all the time in the bars. You didn't realize, at the time, the amount of second-hand smoke you were probably inhaling continually. You'd feel bad for the people who had to work there and put up with it every day; I only had to put up with it on Saturday nights.

We've seen a lot of changes through the years with regard to cutting down on smoking in the system, and ensuring that the people who are smoking are in certain areas that aren't affecting non-smokers and that they're not causing any ill effects. Thank goodness they're not smoking in pharmacies anymore. It was a terrible job cleaning out ashtrays, and it's terrible for the profession.

I know a pharmacist in London, Jim Semchism. He owns a family pharmacy. His dad owned a pharmacy, and he's got brothers and sisters who are pharmacists throughout the London area. Much like my family's in St. Thomas, his is the same in London. He led the charge to remove tobacco from pharmacies in Ontario. He took a lot of flak for it, but, at the end of the day, I think it was a good message to send to people that pharmacies are a place of health and not a place to be purchasing tobacco products. So I'm grateful.

The other thing you'll probably see if you go to the States now—I mentioned the pages—is that in restaurants

you'll get asked, "Smoking or non-smoking?" If you stay in Canada long enough, you forget that, and you're kind of shocked when you walk in and go, "Jeez, we've got to figure out if it's smoking or non-smoking."

I'm also happy that other changes were made here. I brought forth a bill, Ryan's Law—it will be a year this May that it passed—which allowed students to carry their inhalers in schools. It has nothing to do with smoking, but it has something to do with lung health. I'm proud that it has been implemented through the school system, and I know that schools were quick to act on it and allow their students to carry their puffers.

I'm glad we're here to speak about Bill 178. I think this bill is here because something was missed in Bill 45—it should have been included. I know there was a little bit of a rush when Bill 45 came out and this was missed; it's something that could have been added. I guess my one offer of advice for the government is that when they do have to add something they missed in another bill, maybe they could take a look at other bills that are sitting, waiting to be debated, and incorporate them into the bill so we have a meatier bill, something where we can utilize our time. There are a number of bills that they could incorporate into the healthy smoking bill to kind of take care of the backlog of private members' business and also ensure that we get passage of the bill and utilize our time here.

I will make mention of Bill 41, the Lung Health Act. It's by the MPP from Cambridge. She has brought forth this bill, and we've had petitions in the House on numerous days asking the government to bring it forward and debate it. This is a bill that probably could have been included in this smoke-free act. It would create a lung health advisory council, and the purpose of the council would be to make recommendations to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care about lung health issues. When you're discussing the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, why not discuss lung health as a whole?

The council that would be created would include an employee from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, a member of the Ontario Lung Association—which I admit has been very supportive of lung health measures in this chamber, and was quite supportive of Ryan's Law and continues to be—and there would also be members of this council who are interested concerning lung health. The Ontario Health Quality Council would be responsible for providing an annual report card, tabled in the Legislature, with respect to the minister's performance in undertaking the recommendations of this council. Finally, the minister, with the consideration of this council and a report from the Ontario Health Quality Council, would develop and implement an Ontario lung health action plan to target research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease.

That bill is currently in the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills, which is a committee I sit on. We have yet to hear any deputations in taking that bill forward, and we would like to see this bill go forward.

0910

We understand how important lung health is, and this was an opportunity to include this bill. The government has done it before. The member from Sarnia-Lambton, Bob Bailey—his bill on the tax credit for farmers to give to food banks was incorporated in a government bill that they brought forward, and it took Bob's bill out of the private members' backlog. It was passed. Bob was showing me a great email he received that food donations are way up from farmers because this tax credit is available, and it's providing people who need to use food banks access to fresh produce and meat. That was a plus-plus, and it was something that was worked on.

So that was my one aspect to the government that was making up for rushing through a bill and having to bring this out. Maybe the next time they can incorporate some of the private members' bills that are in the backlog. Another one that they have from the member from Etobicoke North is his bill on radon, the radon awareness bill. That's been repeated over and over and over. It would have been an opportunity to bring that bill inclusive into it.

I think it's very, very interesting that we are having this discussion to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. We're having to deal with this bill because it was missed in Bill 45, this aspect of it. Unfortunately—which we've totally done numerous times, especially at committees—when you rush a bill, you run into problems and you have unintended consequences due to the nature of having to expedite a bill.

Basically, this bill came forth and had to be put forward because back in November, the government was announcing one day that medical marijuana could be smoked wherever they pleased, and then 24 hours later, with the backlash of the public, they decided they needed to take a second look at this. If the proper consultations were done previously into drafting Bill 45, we probably could have avoided that whole situation, avoided this bill being here, and we could have been either not discussing this bill and discussing something else that the people of the province want, or they could have brought this bill forward and, again, as I mentioned earlier, included some of the private member bills that have been waiting and waiting to be incorporated and put through this Legislature.

Basically, this bill will prohibit the use of prescribed products and substances anywhere where tobacco is currently prohibited. It targets combustible materials. That's not including e-cigarettes or vape products. That part was done in Bill 45, and the government is currently doing consultation on the regulations in Bill 45 with regard to vaping. I seriously hope they're listening to the owners of vape businesses and trying to work with them to ensure that they don't legislate this group out of business. I'd hate to see people having to purchase their vape products online from a vendor—who knows where the product is coming from?—or if they try to mechanically fix their vape product on their own, the chances of the device possibly exploding or other things. I think these people that

run the vape products are trained to make sure that the product is operating properly, and I hope the government continues to work with this group as they develop the regulations.

This bill amends other things as well. Section 10 of the original bill will be repealed. Section 10 states that a person who owns or occupies a place where the smoking of tobacco is prohibited must ensure that signs referring to the prohibition are posted in accordance with the regulations. They've reworded section 10 to expand this obligation to include signs referring to enforce the prohibition and specify how an element of the offence can be proved in a prosecution.

Subsection 14(2) of the bill is amended to specify that inspectors can enter places where the smoking of a prescribed product or substance is prohibited for the purpose of assessing compliance with the prohibition. Clauses 14(8)(f) and (g) of the original Smoke-Free Ontario Act are amended to specify that inspectors can issue compliance directives to employers and proprietors who fail to comply with their obligations under section 12.1.

Section 15 of the original bill is amended to provide that each person who violates the no-smoking restrictions or the employer-proprietor obligations in section 12.1 is guilty of an offence and on conviction is liable to a maximum fine ranging from \$250 to \$5,000 for individuals and between \$100,000 and \$300,000 for corporations.

Subsection 19(1) of the old bill is amended to authorize the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make certain regulations respecting prescribed products or substances, including regulations which specify how an offence for smoking a prescribed product or substance in a prohibited place can be proved in a prosecution.

It's a lot of words spoken, but basically it's taking anything that is combustible and inhaled and ensuring that they follow the rules of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act much like they do with cigarettes. So whatever is coming down the line that enters into the marketplace can be dealt with at that time as opposed to having bill upon bill continually coming back, dealing with the same issue.

This bill is also dealing with the medical marijuana usage that this government originally allowed in November and then turned around and changed their minds on because of the backlash and actually had a second to think about the issue. They stated that the exemption would include everything from movie theatres to restaurants, offices, stadiums, playgrounds and even here in the Ontario Legislature. They noted that employers, restaurant owners and other business owners could overrule these exemptions and cease medical marijuana use within these organizations. Business owners could also voice and demand some sort of verification if they're allowing the smoking of medical marijuana on their properties. They tried to sneak that exemption through, since it only affected a limited amount of Ontarians. But reading the literature, there are about 23,000 Canadians who have prescriptions for medical marijuana, and even though the ministry claimed to have consulted prior to allowing this regulation, they had to consult again. Four months later,

we have this new legislation, and it's going to prohibit it in certain places where tobacco is prohibited.

I think it's a great idea. As I mentioned earlier about second-hand smoke from tobacco, I'm glad it's moved far away. People have the right to smoke, and I agree with "You can do what you wish." It's not always good behaviour, but sometimes people use tobacco not only for enjoyment but also as medicinal to settle their nerves. I know of quite a few of my customers at my pharmacy who need to smoke. It helps relax them. Smoking also is important when you are quitting and you are on different types of medications, so always check with your pharmacy as you're cutting back. Tobacco smoking can affect the metabolism of certain medications—not a lot of them, but certain ones—and if you decrease the amount you're smoking, your metabolism is going to change and you might actually get an increase of the medication in your system. So if you are quitting smoking, which is a great idea, it would always link in with your pharmacist; there's one at every corner of every street in this province, I believe. Work out a plan with them to ensure that your medications are adjusted and to also give you support as you decide to quit smoking.

So back to the medical marijuana part of the issue, Mr. Speaker. Due to the second-hand smoke, I think it's not in the public's interest to have medical marijuana smoked wherever you please. I think there's a time and a place to take your medication, and that's what medical marijuana is: It's a medication. It's not something for pleasure; it's something you're needing to take to deal with a condition, the disease you may have. As such, as with any medication, there are side effects, and second-hand smoke from medical marijuana may not be beneficial for those others around you in the public.

0920

I think allowing them certain areas, which this bill will allow for them, to partake in their medication is better. I would imagine the majority of medical marijuana users would stay at home anyhow due to their condition. They could schedule their lives around taking their medication, much like other medication forms where people are scheduled taking their medication, ensuring that they're not smoking in movie theatres or restaurants or wherever. It's imperative that the public has an understanding and that those needing medical marijuana are smoking in the places that are prescribed for them.

I mentioned Bill 45 earlier. Last year, when we had a discussion on Bill 45, the government targeted a number of things. One of them, which I mentioned earlier, was the Electronic Cigarettes Act. There were a number of amendments, which included: the prohibition of the sale of promotional items together with tobacco products; the sale of flavoured tobacco products; the list of places that an inspector is specifically empowered to enter was broadened; adjustments were made to the penalty and prohibition provisions; and the power to prescribe places for the purposes of the act was also amended to provide for exemptions.

There were also a number of amendments to the Electronic Cigarettes Act, which included: the prohibition of the sale and supply of electronic cigarettes to persons under the age of 19; restrictions were placed on the display and promotion of electronic cigarettes; the sale of electronic cigarettes in certain places was prohibited; a provision was made for regulating packaging of electronic cigarettes and for regulating the sale of flavoured electronic cigarettes; the use of electronic cigarettes becomes prohibited in enclosed work spaces and enclosed public spaces; and the amendments that are outlined in Bill 178 should have been included at the same time they did this.

I've spoken to a couple of owners of shops in my riding, and they're for limiting the sale of electronic cigarettes and ensuring that youth don't get access to these products. Their concern is—and I know the government is consulting with them; I hope they're listening to them—the vape device that they utilize: (1) They have to teach people how to use it properly, so they have to turn it on, and (2) when they have to fix it, they have to have the ability to turn it on. Right now, where they're leaning with the regulations, that might be banned for them to do so inside their shop.

I'm hoping there's a workaround somewhere along the line that's not going to be too expensive to the owners of the shops which allows them the ability to turn on the device in order to teach someone how to use it and/or fix the product. The simple solution of sending them outside isn't going to do. It's ridiculous, especially when we have our cold winter days or it's raining; it's just not feasible. You can't really ask a business to do that.

They sat down and they showed me their business and what they go through to help people quit smoking. That's the main use of these electronic cigarettes: It gets people off the nicotine and tobacco product to a straight nicotine product, and then they can wean themselves off. It's much like the patch that you have in pharmacies or the inhaler device. You're transferring from the actual cigarette to a product that doesn't have all the cancer-causing agents in it that you're inhaling. You're cut down to the nicotine in some sort of solution, probably a water base, that you inhale, and you can slowly cut down your dosage. It's much like the patch. Quite often in the pharmacy, I've seen people have to try quitting numerous times before they're successful. It's a tough go. Tobacco is quite addictive; it's quite hard to get off.

The pages here—hopefully you haven't started smoking yet. I would suggest not even trying it, staying away from it. When you talk to anybody who has smoked for a long time, they always regret starting. So to avoid that regret, do something else with your time. Stay away from tobacco products.

The fact that these devices help people quit smoking is a reason why the government needs to work with these places to ensure that they're able to continue their business and ensure that the devices are safe and the people utilizing them understand their use. It's not a complex tool, but the different advantages of using it need to be shown.

That was in Bill 45, and as I said, this Bill 178 is making up for the fact that what's in Bill 178 was missed in Bill 45 due to the rush.

I think the other thing that could have been placed in Bill 178 is the whole issue of contraband tobacco. It's something that, for some reason, the government doesn't seem to want to deal with. If you look at the charts, the smoking rates are decreasing, but I think if you went and looked at contraband tobacco sales, they're increasing. Unfortunately, I think they've just switched. The sad part is that we get a lot of tax dollars from tobacco sales that this government needs. They overspend, so they need to make up for that money they've overspent. That money is just going to the illegal tobacco trade.

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: What's that?

Hon. James J. Bradley: On all the things you ask for in question period every day to spend on.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: We're just showing you how to spend the money that you have.

Anyway, so this illegal tobacco trade is flourishing. Anybody in the riding probably sees it day to day. People talk about it openly and the fact that they all access their cheap cigarettes. It's unfortunate. This was another opportunity time. They had a bill which was basically saying, "We're going to treat anything that comes out like cigarettes, like cigarettes, and make sure we don't have to deal with it in this bill." So it's not a complex bill that we're debating here, but it was an opportunity to include other things.

I've mentioned Kathryn McGarry's law, the Lung Health Act, the radon law that we could have added in, but contraband cigarettes are something we could have totally tackled in order to crack down on not only the illegal situation that has grown in the province but also decreasing the harmful risk of smoking within our province.

Tobacco claims too many lives: 13,000 Ontarians die every year due to tobacco. That's about 36 people a day. I think everyone probably has a story of someone who got lung cancer somewhere along the line in their family and passed away too early. My uncle Lou died when he was 69. My grandparents lived into their nineties. You just think, if he had the same lifespan, he died 30 years before he should have. He quit smoking. He quit smoking the day after he found out he had lung cancer. That's too bad.

So I think there's something we can do, not only in the normal marketplace but with the illegal trade going on with the contrabands. We need to do better. We have the power here at the Legislature to create rules and regulations to clamp down on the illegal activity which is leading to people's ill health instead of sitting back and ignoring it. The member from Prince Edward-Hastings—usually behind me, but to my back left; now he's behind me. He has a great bill out there to help start dealing with contraband cigarettes, and I do have some notes on that; I'll have to get to that. I will get to the member from Prince Edward-Hastings in a minute, his bill. Anyway,

it's a great bill that he has brought forward, a private member's bill. It's another bill we could have incorporated in this bill at the same time.

But back to contraband, in some areas they estimate that up to 50% of sales are due to contraband; the average is about 33%, which is quite a few. That's pretty close to one in three cigarette purchases being purchased illegally in Ontario. By comparison, British Columbia is 17%, Manitoba is 15%, Saskatchewan is 11%. That Brad Wall does things well for his province. Quebec has seen great improvements since their police force was given the authority to investigate, seize and restrict cigarette manufacturing equipment in vehicles.

Many argue that the illegal industry that occurs within the province of Ontario is the worst in the western world. We bring forth legislation continually to raise taxes on the legal products, and that's the deterrence. Unfortunately, the illegal trade, which does not pay any taxes, is increasing. So I think we can do better in the province. We can do better to deal with the illegal manufacturers, the illegal smugglers and the illegal dealers of contraband cigarettes.

0930

As I mentioned earlier, the MPP for Prince Edward-Hastings and my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk, Toby Barrett, our ag critic, also brought forth legislation hoping to deal with contraband tobacco and accessing this illegal product.

If the government really wanted to get to the root of the problem, they could have done things for the last 13 years that they've been in power. You can't hold on to the old argument of previous governments when you've been in power for 13 years. You had 13 years to fix everything that you argue and complain about. So if you haven't fixed it, you obviously agree with what the previous governments have done.

In November of this past year, the member for Prince Edward-Hastings, Todd Smith, brought in Bill 139, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and the Tobacco Tax Act. It was a great bill. I sat in on one of his meetings he had with some public health representatives, and it was a great meeting. The bill targets contraband tobacco and the sale focused on children. It amends the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to require the government to establish a public education program about the public health risks associated with the use of tobacco. It includes amendments to include the prohibition of the sale of tobacco in public and private schools. And the fines to those presenting illegal age identification and those convicted of selling tobacco in designated spaces are increased.

I know the health inspectors throughout the province are usually designated to ensure that businesses selling cigarettes are selling them to people who are of age. They do a good job, because we get calls at the office saying, "They tricked us. They didn't look that age to ask if they're 25 or under." It's not going to be 100% across the board, and some health inspectors will be overzealous, but the majority of them do their job.

When you have contraband cigarettes, you don't have those inspectors out there ensuring that those people aren't selling to minors. The way I figure it, if you're selling tobacco illegally, you don't really care who you're selling it to. You just want the money. That's why you're doing it. Unfortunately, too many of our kids are having access to these illegal products, and this is the time to step forward. Any time is the time to step forward for this government, but every time we're not always having discussions on the tobacco act. That doesn't happen too often, unless, of course, they devise a bill and forget to implement some of the ideas and have to come back with another one. I think when they come back with the other one they should be implementing ideas to decrease the illegal trade that's occurring in our province.

Under Todd Smith's bill, the Tobacco Tax Act is amended to permit the minister to share the proceeds of forfeited property with police forces that assist in investigations that lead to the forfeiture. I think municipalities would be happy with that; I think they're stretched on their own budgets. I believe that anything to help out their budgets with regard to their emergency services and the police is a benefit.

The bill also says that the costs incurred by a police force or the crown to remove, store or dispose of a vehicle under section 24 of the act are a debt due to the police force or the crown and may be recovered in court. Again, the cost of dealing with illegal contraband trade can be dealt with by the police force.

In his bill, enforcement powers are also expanded to include police officers, in addition to the existing persons authorized under the ministry, relating to unmarked tobacco products. Increases are made in the penalties that apply to offences relating to interjurisdictional importers, the manufacturing of tobacco products, the possession of unmarked cigarettes, and the purchase or receipt of marked or unmarked cigarettes for resale.

Finally, a person's driver's licence may be suspended if he or she uses a motor vehicle in the commission of certain offences. Suspension periods are also increased. I think that's a good deterrent. Nobody wants to lose their independence with driving. We see it time and again with our seniors who hit 80 years old and have to do that test. They get fearful because driving is their mode of transportation, especially in rural Ontario. We don't have the buses; we don't have the taxi services that are in large urban areas. In rural Ontario, we have the car. We have bicycles, but usually when you hit 80—there are fewer and fewer riding bicycles at 80, and when winter hits, you need your car.

I've been trying to push. I haven't been mean about it, but I'm gently pushing my local Ministry of Transportation in London. Right now, our seniors in Elgin county have to drive to London to do the written test and the eye test. I was able to locate a spot, free of charge to the ministry, in St. Thomas—which my seniors have been asking for around the whole area—where maybe once a month we could get the ministry to schedule some test dates; not the driving—that's another ball of wax—but

the actual written test and the eye test. I'm getting, "No," but I find that if you keep asking, perhaps down the road we'll see some changes and some benefits back into the St. Thomas area. A lot of government services have been moved out for one reason or another, but we in St. Thomas and Elgin county do need access to government services. We have the need. We have a high seniors' population.

Sorry I went off on that commercial break. Anyway, suspending driver licences is a good tactic.

It's quite clear that contraband tobacco is causing an uproar in our schools. Too many children are getting access to illegal cigarettes. I hope the government will support the member from Prince Edward-Hastings's bill. There was a time when they could incorporate it into this bill. Maybe at committee we could offer to incorporate this bill into Bill 178.

I mentioned earlier that Toby Barrett, Haldimand-Norfolk, has Bill 162 on the table as well, which is going to tackle the illegal trade. It's important that all these bills that have been put forward are dealing with lung health and how chronic lung disease is debilitating. It's something we could work on together to ensure that people, especially youth, have limited access to illegal products—have no access to illegal products. That would be the goal. That's never going to happen; I get that. But for our government to ignore the situation isn't going to make it better. It's going to ensure that people have access to illegal product. It's going to hook people on smoking—our younger kids—and it's going to deny access to tax revenue that this government needs and it's going to increase lung disease.

They talk a great game at reducing smog. Elizabeth Witmer shut down the first coal plant. They followed up and shut down the rest, and smog alerts are gone. It's great, but they're doing nothing about contraband cigarettes, which are on the rise, which are causing more damage to the lungs of our youth and our adults, which are causing an increase in the health care system at the end of the day when people end up with lung cancer, which is on the rise, or other lung effects, like asthma. The use of medication is going to grow and the access to doctors is going to grow.

We spend \$52 billion on the health care system each year—it grows. They've rationed the health care system, and we've had—this government has stepped forward and is starting rationing health care in the system. They cut doctors by \$800 million. People's access to health care is decreased. They froze funding at hospitals for four years. There are fewer beds and long waits. They can't fix it within a year. They throw in the 1% but they pull out \$100 million from the lottery fund going to hospitals. We've seen a lot of services cut and we've seen a lot of health care professionals lose their jobs.

You look at contraband cigarettes and you could do something about that to decrease the amount of people who, down the road, are going to need the health care system, which is 140,000 new people each year into the system. We have a growing demographic who are going

to utilize the health care system. Why not do stuff or take steps outside of the health care system to cut down on future costs in the health care system by tackling illegal contraband cigarettes?

0940

I think that's a great step the government could use. The money they could save—fewer people getting diagnosed with lung diseases, but also the increased revenue in the taxes could be filtered into the health care system and ensure that proper funding is occurring throughout Ontario instead of the rationing we see day in and day out, leading to emergency room crisis. I'm sure, Speaker, in your office, you have people calling up.

I had a lady call up the office. Her daughter has dual diagnosis and was in crisis. They ended up putting her into a regular hospital bed, so she's not getting the services she needs. There's a bed waiting for her in London, but she's got to wait two years to get to it—two years. Someday, we'll start treating mental health like physical health and ensure quicker response times, that the beds are there when you need them. But at the same time, physical health is on the decline in the province. I mentioned earlier that in January, February and March, if you wanted knee or hip replacement surgery, you couldn't access that in Woodstock, Strathroy, London or St. Thomas. They ran out of money. Unfortunately, the seniors who paid taxes their whole lives for a health care system they wanted access to when they needed it—they need to access it now and they can't. They're sitting at home and suffering. Sitting in one place too long is not healthy. They decline in health and they withdraw from social activities because it's just too painful to leave their house.

I think it's prudent of this government, when you can capitalize on opportunities to save the health care system money by doing things outside of the health care system, such as tackling contraband cigarette sales and reducing the chances of lung disease—or, if you don't want to go that far, because I know this government doesn't want to deal with contraband cigarette sales, maybe incorporating other bills like the member from Cambridge's, Etobicoke North, the member from Prince Edward-Hastings or Haldimand-Norfolk into a makeup bill, which this really is.

This bill is purely here because Bill 45 was rushed, there was no consultation and they missed this. We mentioned that at committee, that when you rush a bill, you miss things. I'm glad they're fixing their mistake; however, I always look at how we can fix a mistake and utilize what's in front of us to push legislation through that's sitting in the committee room or waiting for second reading at the Legislature, because there are good ideas on both sides of the House. There's a lot on this side of the House that the government can utilize. I mentioned Sarnia-Lambton's Bob Bailey's tax credit bill for agriculture. They did utilize that bill.

Anyway, those are my main comments on Bill 178. I think the medical marijuana issue is going to be probably key to discussion going forward. There's a certain organ-

ization that thinks that they should be allowed to be wherever they want with it. I think that, with the consequences of the second-hand smoke from medical marijuana, we have to ensure that it's removed a distance from the public. I guess this bill, when it's in place, will ensure that new items that come down the line somewhere in the future of I guess research and development, that people who would like to partake in smoking will be covered under this bill. I hope there's a way to work the regulations out that kind of is one-size-fits-all in these bills. I would hate if, 15 years down the road, if other things have gone to market, businesses have to put up five different signs for the different items that are on there, because then you get the sign traffic and you ignore it all. Your mind just blocks it out. It's much like the billboards on the highways. I don't see them anymore. I do see the speed limits. I do monitor the speed limits, in case anyone's watching or listening.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Those guys in black and white cars remind me.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Yeah. Every so often you see them on the side of the road. I usually take the 403 home, so I cut through the Hamilton area, it's very nice, and head up at Woodstock at the 401. The Woodstock area is chock full of the black-and-whites. Actually, the Brantford area, too, is quite full. They're tough, which is good. That's what we want: safety on the roads. They do a good job. I bet you there's not an MPP in this building that hasn't had a conversation with one of those guys at one time in their role as we go from place to place in our ridings.

Joe Preston was the MP in my area, and his plates said "Joe MP." He couldn't even hide. They loved pulling him over, especially between Dorchester into Aylmer. He'd try to get to those events as quick as possible and he got caught quite often. The fines that he paid, he probably bought a few police cars with regard to the fines that he paid. Anyway, Joe's retired now and he's doing well.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Are you going to get the "Jeff MPP"?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: No, I don't need a marked car. My car licence plate says "Elgin St. Thomas" on it so if you're out there, you know that's my vehicle. I have a Ram, a Ram truck. It's white. It's nice.

Back to the bill, Mr. Speaker. I went on another tangent there.

Interjection: You're a mad scientist or something.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: A mad scientist. Bill 178, that we're debating here, is a bill that is amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to include products down the road to ensure that they fall into the right category, to ensure that the dangerous effects are limited, and the youth in our province are protected from having access to these products.

It will be interesting, when and if the federal government ever legalizes marijuana, if this Legislature will bring a bill forward to debate or whether they'll just utilize Bill 178 and that's that. I imagine that's what the design of Bill 178 is, down the road. It will be a more intriguing discussion between medical marijuana and the

legalization of marijuana and how that's going to go forward.

My main focus of this talk was, number one, this bill—Bill 45—was rushed and, due to the rushing, you forget things. So this bill has come forward after the government originally said you could smoke medical marijuana wherever you wanted and then decided they should actually rethink that and do some consultation. Now we have this bill to deal with that.

My advice to the government is, when you do this—when you rush through consultation and you forget something in a bill and you have to have a makeup bill to make up for the mistake you made—look at the bills that are sitting waiting for debate at committee or in the Legislature and see what you can incorporate into it so that we can save some time here. We have so many bills backlogged in private member business that are beneficial to Ontarians. How can we utilize our time better and incorporate these bills into place so that we can debate and get them off the backlog but also get them debated?

I know this bill will be passed through the House before we break for the summer, so that's one bill, but there are so many bills back here. The lung health bill, is that going to be passed by summer? Is the Prince Edward-Hastings bill going to be passed by summer? The radon bill, which I think was started before I even started being an MPP—we're still waiting. You had a bill, Mr. Speaker—your actors bill—to protect youth actors: How long did that take? That was years. Three years.

Bills like this, that we have sitting on the floor today: We can utilize those bills that are waiting, that have been waiting and probably have no hope of completing before either the election is called or we clear the decks and start all over with a new throne speech.

It's unfortunate—

Mr. Robert Bailey: Bill 76, the LNG bill.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Bill 76, the LNG bill: I think that's at committee this week. Bob Bailey I think passes the most bills out of anybody on the opposition side. Well, maybe Mr. Speaker might, too.

I know I've kind of gone off topic a couple times—

Interjections.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: However, I'm hoping that I've taught you a little bit about the people in my riding. I talked about Joe Preston, a retired MP. He served 10 years.

0950

Hon. Steven Del Duca: What was his licence plate again?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: MP Joe. He's changed it now. I think he's got an X put in front of it: XMP Joe. Joe's doing well. Joe still lives in the riding. He's in Lambeth now, which is the north end of the riding; it's in the London part of the riding. He's operating a Wendy's and Boston Pizza, so he's doing all right in his retirement. He's got a grandson, Elliot; Elliot's about one year old, so he's enjoying his grandson. He spent a couple of weeks in Florida—a good rest.

I hope many of you in this Legislature, when it's time for you to retire, that you get some time with your family and relax. I know the amount of work that they go through, and hopefully down the road—

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Two years, three months, for some of us, yes.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Some of them.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Some of them, sorry.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I call upon the government. I thank them for supporting Ryan's Law that we passed. May 5, I think, will be the first-year anniversary. I'm hoping to get a report soon from the Ministry of Education on how that rollout has done.

The Ontario Lung Association has done a wonderful job with the background information to educate the teachers, staff, the principals, the parents and the children about asthma.

The new pages—you guys can access your inhalers. If you're an asthmatic, you can have your inhaler now. As long as your parents said yes, you can have it in your pocket. You don't have to give it to the school nurse.

Interjection: You can have it in the chamber.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Yes, you can have it in your pocket right now, providing you have your parents' permission. That was the key: to ensure that you're safe.

The other part of my bill ensures that schools have the proper ventilation and such in the school system to ensure that the allergens are minimized. The first part of September every year is when asthma attacks skyrocket, usually the third week of September. That's why we have asthma campaigns in September. Kids are getting back to school. They are in enclosed spaces now. The schools have probably been shut down for a number of months. There are kids running around and there are bacteria and viruses everywhere, and they get access to the inhalers.

I'm almost done, Mr. Speaker. I'm on my last page. So as we get done, basically, as we head towards the end of my hour—and I've got to tell you, it's been tough to fit this bill in an hour, because it's a makeup bill. It's a bill that they put together because they missed it in Bill 45. They missed it because they rushed. When you rush, without consultation, you make unintended consequences.

I'm hoping with this budget that's on the floor—because the finance committee is still writing the report. The budget came out really early. There were really no consultations on it. It was something they had printed a while ago—maybe some tweaks after the bulk of it was printed. I hope there are no unintended consequences, although a \$300-billion debt is going to hurt. It's going to hurt down the road. A billion dollars a month is going to interest payments—\$1 billion. Think what you could do with \$1 billion—\$1 billion to go to the health care system. I've brought up mental health numerous times. A billion dollars could help fund the fight against contraband cigarettes, which should be included in Bill 178. It's unfortunate that that was missed.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, thank you for listening. I hope I've given you a little history of where we've come

from—from scraping out the ashtray in my pharmacy at eight years old, every Sunday listening to the Detroit Tigers, who, by the way, in 1984, had the best baseball team, I think, in history, with Jack Morris, Chet Lemon and Alan Trammell. Those were the days.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Al Kaline.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Who's that?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Al Kaline. Lou Whitaker.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Lou Whitaker.

Interjection: Cecil Fielder.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: He was later. Cecil Fielder was later. It was great.

We've gone from that to smoking in airplanes to, now, people can actually have a breath of fresh air when they're at their restaurant, when they're out having a beer, when they're flying in their airplane. And my daughter does not have to go to the pharmacy and clean out ashtrays. She can sweep, she can fill up the chocolate bars, but she does not have to clean out ashtrays at the pharmacy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to the comments. Any questions you have, throw them at me, and we'll see what comes forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, because you're right: An hour on this bill is a tough thing to do, and you pulled it off. It was shaky at the last few minutes, but you pulled it off.

That just goes to show you the arrogance, sometimes, of this government, who refuse to listen to the people of this province when putting bills together, and just chose not to. They didn't do the consultations, so they missed this very important piece that should have been part of Bill 45. The member talked about that in his very long hour on this very minimal bill. It's an important piece of the puzzle that should have been part of Bill 45.

I'm grateful to see that our children will not have to be put in the way of other people's need for smoking medical marijuana, and that that's something that people will not be able to do in a public place. The same as you would not be able to smoke a cigarette in a public place, you will have to take that outside. I know, personally, that I appreciate it, being a non-smoker myself, and a quitter.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: For how long now?

Miss Monique Taylor: A quitter—two and a half years.

The vaping is a big part of people quitting cigarettes, and so that is an important piece. I think that it needs to be outside. We need to not make it the norm for children in our province, because everywhere we look now, there's someone with a vaper. Personally, I have no idea what they have in it. That's up to them, and that's their business. But I don't think it needs to be the norm for our children or for people to have to just have it in their face.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions or comments?

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's a pleasure to rise to speak to this bill. Many, many years ago, my mother used to smoke, before I was born, and my grandfather used to smoke as well. I remember her talking to me, even when I was a kid, about how pleased she was, how proud she was that my grandfather quit, and how pleased she was that she quit. She did it, first and foremost, to protect my health and my sister's health when we were born, but also she protected her own health. My grandfather lived for decades after he quit smoking, and my mother is still with us and in fantastic health. So the importance of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, I can't underline that enough.

This bill is something I'm very proud of, because it's common sense, right? It's just common sense. I was on a panel on CFRB radio the other morning, with Moore in the Morning, the morning show—and a big thanks to John Moore and Becky Coles, who had me on the show—and we were talking about this particular proposal. A lot of the people on the panel, and even later in the day on the radio, were just saying that this is common sense. That's really what sticks out in my mind and why I think it's important that we get this bill passed as soon as possible.

It's common sense because what it does is say that no matter what you're smoking, the restrictions that are under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act should apply. Whether you're smoking a cigarette or whether it's medical marijuana, if you're in an enclosed space, if you're in a car with a child under 16 years of age, if you're in a restaurant or if you're on a patio, it doesn't matter what you're smoking, but those things should not be happening in those places, where they could compromise a person's health, or where they could compromise a person's comfort and they could compromise a person's ability to enjoy whatever it is that they're doing and to go through their daily life.

I think this makes a lot of sense, and I'm proud to support the act. By doing it, what we're doing is we're helping people live healthier, we're helping people live longer, and we're ultimately enhancing the quality of life of our constituents.

1000

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions or comments?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I, too, have an airplane story. This was not all that long ago. I was flying to Dubai, through Kuwait. I was sitting on the aircraft, and all of a sudden I saw this smoke billowing forward from the back. This is not all that long ago. I honestly thought there was a fire in the plane. When was the last time you were ever on an airplane in modern days and you saw smoke? So I can tell you, I share your concern about your flight.

But the North Bay district, North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit is very concerned about the sale of illegal cigarettes and their impact on efforts to protect our children from the dangers of smoking. On January 27 of this year, our health board passed a resolution in support of Bill 139, the Smoke-Free Schools Act, put forward by my colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings, Mr. Todd Smith. The resolution notes that Bill 139 includes a pro-

hibition on the sale of any tobacco products in schools, increased fines for offenders caught selling illegal tobacco and increased suspension periods of driver's licences of those convicted of using a vehicle to transport illegal tobacco. It also notes that Bill 139 has been endorsed by the Canadian Cancer Society, the Heart and Stroke Foundation and the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco, so I want to commend our member from Prince Edward-Hastings.

The health board in our area also points out that the number of daily and occasional smokers in the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit area is 7% higher than the provincial average, which underscores my concern in my riding. Bill 139 deserves due consideration in this Legislature, and I hope that that aids in the discussion that we're having today on Bill 178, the Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This bill—obviously we needed to have it. There was a public outcry about why this government came out with a regulation that you could smoke prescribed products, kind of open-ended. So we heard back from the public, and the government had to rethink and come up with a plan to address the problem.

This is not the first example that we have, unfortunately, where this government hasn't had a thoughtful process in legislation. If you think about Hydro One and the sale of Hydro One, they're going forward with that even though 80% of the public has said, "Stop the sale of Hydro." Some 195 municipalities have given a resolution to stop of sale of Hydro, but they're not listening in that regard.

The other one, the legislation with regards to seniors' Ontario drug benefits: They proposed a 70% increase on the annual deductible for seniors who make \$19,500. We are now going out in our communities and letting people know about this particular legislation in the budget, because nobody saw it coming. There were no consultations. There was no warning. That's another problematic issue, so we bring it up. It's lucky that we caught that, and we're letting this government know that it's a wrong-headed idea. The Premier agreed to a 30-day consultation. These things should be done before a bill comes to this House.

Now we're debating this bill, which is needed, addressing a need that the public has asked for. People don't want vaping anywhere and everywhere. It talks about vaping in a car, prescribed products in your car and prescribed products in employment. There is a part in here, though, that's an exemption for prescribed products in scientific research and testing facilities. That makes sense; we have to know what kind of effects these products are having on people's health.

It's symptomatic of putting legislation through in this House, time-allocating things and rushing through without getting fulsome debate on legislation. I'm glad the government finally listened in this case and we're talking about it today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Elgin—Middlesex—London: two minutes.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain, who I'm looking forward to listening to in the next couple of minutes, and the members from Etobicoke Centre, Nipissing and, of course, London—Fanshawe—my neighbour back home.

Lots of points were raised. The member from Etobicoke Centre said this is common sense. Yes, it is common sense, and it was common sense to have been put in Bill 45. They rushed it. They made a mistake. They made a mistake with medical marijuana. They're making up for it—I get it—but at the same time, why not incorporate one of the other bills that are sitting here that's going to deal with lung health and/or smoking, get that bill off the table and start dealing with other problems in this province?

The member from Prince Edward—Hastings's bill to do with contraband cigarettes, especially those sold to our youth, is an excellent bill to put forward. On the other side of the House, the member from Cambridge: The Lung Health Act would be great to add in here. Unfortunately, they rushed to rush the bill. They came forward to fix it, and they're rushing again and aren't taking the time and opportunity to have a real common sense bill in the Legislature here to deal with more than just one fixer-up item.

They embarrassed themselves; they made a mistake. They're paying for it right now, because the opposition is going to hit them on this, as we should. We should point out that the incompetence in some of these ministries is unfortunate, and the people who pay for it are Ontarians. And because we're not dealing with contraband cigarettes in this province, our health care costs are going to increase, our youth are put at risk and there's quite a bit of tax revenue from the legal sale of cigarettes that we're missing out on. We know this government needs that money, because why else would you sell Hydro One if you weren't desperate for cash? There's no other reason for that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to be able to have a few moments to have my voice on record regarding Bill 178. It's a small bill, an important piece of the legislation that was missed, unfortunately, in Bill 45, so I'm happy to have a few minutes. I have to say that I'm pleased I don't have the same hour that the member before me did, because it's a pretty thin bill. But like I said, it's important.

Currently, the Smoke-Free Ontario Act applies to tobacco products only, so Bill 178 will extend the application of the act to include prescribed products and substances, so prescribed in cabinet by regulation. This is a legislative framework that will allow medical marijuana use to be governed by the same no-smoking law that currently applies to tobacco. That's an important piece, Speaker.

As we know, as we're moving into a future where we know that medical marijuana is sometimes a better choice

than narcotics, especially very highly addictive narcotics, we need to have things in place to ensure that we have a safe public, that we have responsibilities, that we have laws around how medical marijuana could be used. Personally, I would prefer to see people with medical marijuana than to be using very highly addictive drugs that we've seen many of our citizens in this province fall fate to. It's through no fault of their own that they've become addicted to these narcotics that are prescribed to them by their doctor, but there is also no real plan of getting them off those drugs because they become highly addicted and then are turning to methadone programs.

That is an unfortunate reality that we're faced with here in the province of Ontario. We see many, many folks who would not typically fall into the drug addiction realm of their lives and never would be expected to be there, but because they've been prescribed very heavy, hard narcotics, they are now finding themselves faced with addictions and with family members, quite frankly, who don't know how to deal with it. This, I think, will help along the framework of medical marijuana being used for pain control, and I'm fully in favour of that.

I'm happy to see that we have legislation that will now create a better environment and put rules in place so people will know the limits, because nobody wants to be sitting in a restaurant these days with somebody smoking beside them, regardless of what it is, whether it's for medical purposes or not. We know that not so many years ago, really, people were smoking in restaurants and bars on a regular basis. They were smoking here. I wonder where the ashtrays attached to our desks, because you can be sure that they were smoking cigarettes sitting in this very seat, in this very Legislature.

1010

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Big, fat cigars.

Miss Monique Taylor: Yes, big, fat cigars. Boy, am I ever glad that I missed those days, Speaker, because that's the reality, and we have come so far. I'm quite sure that when my mother held me when I was first born, there was an ashtray on the side of her table. Let's think back to this, because that's the reality of where we have come from.

Now we have vaping instead of cigarettes, which, for many, has become a better solution. It has become something that people can count on now or try to lean on to try to quit smoking. Vapers are becoming the new norm. We need to make sure that we have rules in place, whether it's for vaping for nicotine or vaping to not have the nicotine but giving you the sensation and the pleasure of smoking to help you quit smoking or whether it's vaping medical marijuana—we need to make sure that we are responsible for society and that we put plans in place to make sure that it's done responsibly.

It's really unfortunate that the government missed the boat on this in Bill 45, because I know there would have been great legislation that we could have been talking about today instead of dealing with this very small bill, but a very important piece. Because it was missed in Bill 45, it now is before us, unfortunately wasting very precious time that we have here at the Legislature to put for-

ward good bills, good ideas that really make a difference for the people of this province. There are so many things that I wish that we could move forward on in this House when it comes to changes to the Child and Family Services Act, when it comes to our children's mental health and when it comes to our aboriginal folks in the north, when we know that they're in situations and in an absolute—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Crisis.

Miss Monique Taylor: "Crisis" doesn't even seem like it's enough. To have children who are covered in sores from head to toe is heartbreaking. It's shameful. It's beyond my words, it's beyond my thoughts, of how things have gotten so bad there and how not just a provincial government but a federal government has allowed the state of our Third World Canada to happen. It's a crisis, Speaker.

We're not talking about that here today. We're talking about a piece of legislation that is so very small because it is a missed opportunity in a past bill, Bill 45, where this should have been in place then, and it's not. So today we are here, making up for the government's mistake once again, for their failure to do consultation, for their failure to make sure that they get it right for the people of this province the first time.

Medical marijuana is something that we know is coming to our future. We need to make sure that we have rules and regulations around it to make sure that we have public safety, to make sure that all people in the province of Ontario have the right to a smoke-free Ontario. I just wish that this would have been done before. I'm hoping that there are some extra dollars in this for enforcement to make sure that we're not just creating another law but we're actually going to follow through on it.

Speaker, maybe I'll just let folks know that concerned citizens are able to submit their comments on this government legislation and regulatory proposals regarding medical marijuana and e-cigarettes until April 24. You can contact the Ontario Legislature, put your name on the list, put your proposals in and have your comments and your voice heard here in the Legislature by the government, by the folks who will be putting further rules together. Please have your say. This is your opportunity. It's not very often that the government asks—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Hamilton Mountain, thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's 10:15. This House stands recessed till 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Toby Barrett: We all welcome Don McCabe, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and his directors here today.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: On that note, I want to introduce Mark Kunkel from Powassan, here with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a lot of guests visiting Queen's Park today from the University Women's Club North York. I'm going to read their names: Diane Johns, Joan Deleuze, Colette Simpson, Margaret McGovern—she worked with me when I was in public health—Dian Laycock, Barb Cook, Helen-Sue Gorman, Joanne Garside, Barbara Betts, Marion Goltz, Susan Goldenberg, Joanne Reilly, Barb Powell, Ann Lutterman, Carolyn Horton, Mary Ellen Hayes, Marie Blacklock, June Brown and June Gurvich. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Today I'm very pleased to welcome to the chamber Pat Jilesen, provincial director at the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. He comes from the great riding of Huron-Bruce. Welcome, Patrick.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Today I'm delighted to introduce good friends of mine from the Ontario Waterpower Association, which is located in the wonderful riding of Peterborough: Paul Norris, Bob Allen, Frank Perri, Stephen Somerville, Karen McGhee, Grant Hipgrave, Bill Touzel, Heather Ferguson, Michael Morgenroth, John Wynsma, Vince Kulchyski, Melanie Boyd and Nick Kaluzny. We welcome them here today. They're having their reception later today.

Mr. Jim Wilson: It's my pleasure to introduce Mr. Keith Currie, who is no stranger to this place and a very important member of the board of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Today is Lakehead University lobby day here at Queen's Park, and we have a great contingent here from the university: Dr. Brian Stevenson, president and vice-chancellor; Dr. Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux, vice-provost, aboriginal initiatives; Dr. Peggy Smith, member of the Ogimaawin council; Richard Longtin, government relations director; and Dr. Andrew Dean, vice-president of research and innovation. We invite them all to the reception this afternoon in room 228. Welcome.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm so excited to introduce my cousin Ariel Albin. She's a grade 10 student at CHAT, which is the Community Hebrew Academy of Toronto. She's job shadowing with me today. Welcome, Ariel.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd like to introduce Frank Perri from Horizon Utilities, for St. Catharines Hydro, here in the members' gallery, to my right.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to welcome some students from the Ryerson Politics and Governance Students' Association: Jaskaran Malhi, Philip Menecola and Katiana Moussa. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'm so proud that we have page captain Vanessa Russell from my riding of Etobicoke Centre here. Her parents are here. Her mother, Jenn Russell, and her father, Troy Russell, are here in the public gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to welcome Troy Cockriell and Mitchell Shnier, who are here to go to lunch with their MPP. They're in the members' west gallery. Welcome.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, in the members' west gallery today, we forgot to introduce my good friend Don

McCabe, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I too would like to welcome folks here from the Ontario Waterpower Association today. I don't have the full list of the names, but it's great to have them here. They've got a reception tonight. I remind the people that my riding has over 1,100 megawatts of clean waterpower at its disposal.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'm going to add my welcome as well to the Ontario Waterpower Association and to Paul Norris and his gang. We had a great meeting this morning and, of course, they're having their day here. The reception is here this evening.

As well—they have just entered into the west gallery—President Stevenson, from Lakehead University; Dr. Andrew Dean, the vice-president of research and innovation; Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux, vice-provost, aboriginal initiatives; and Richard Longtin, government relations director. Lakehead University is having their lobby day here and tonight. We hope to see all the members out there as well.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'd like to welcome some of my constituents visiting Queen's Park today. They're the Ryerson University Politics and Governance Students' Association, and I'd like to welcome them. They're up there somewhere.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the Speaker's gallery is someone I would like to introduce. If you think I can be the grizzly bear, don't mess with Mama Bear. That's my wife, Rosemarie.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Behave yourself today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to get a copy of Hansard and underline that, from the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. The chips are all high now. Don't worry about it.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The leader of the third party on a point of order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I rise to correct my record from question period on Monday. During a question on aboriginal health issues, I referred to the Premier's previous role as critic for aboriginal affairs as opposed to Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members have the right to correct their record. It was done well. Thank you. I appreciate that.

JIM HILLYER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order: the member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you, Speaker. I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to rise and observe a moment of silence to mark the tragic and sudden death of Mr. Jim Hillyer, the member of Parliament for Medicine Hat–Cardston–Warner.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville, the deputy leader, is asking for unanimous consent to rise for a moment of silence in tribute to the fallen member. Do we agree? Agreed.

I would ask all members and everyone, please, to stand and pay tribute.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Every small tribute of respect is appreciated by the members in this House.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I rise today and, on behalf of all colleagues, say our profound condolences to the political community with the passing of Mr. Hillyer and, yesterday, of Mr. Ford.

My question is for the Premier. On October 28, the Premier said, "The agreements were in line with our net-zero bargaining framework" when she was referring to the secret union payouts with the teachers. On November 25, the Premier said three more times that agreements were made with a net-zero framework—four stretch goals in a very small amount of time.

1040

Now, today we find out from the CP's Allison Jones that the deals "actually come with an additional \$300-million cost." But that's just the tip of the iceberg, because we know the Auditor General has yet to return her report into her investigation of these secret payouts. I ask the Premier: How does net zero equal \$300 million?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Education is going to want to comment on this.

What we're talking about is nine agreements that have been ratified, that are consistent with our net-zero bargaining framework. Most importantly, students remain in school. There were no cuts to the classrooms. There were modest wage increases that were offset by finding other savings throughout the collective agreement.

Let me just say on the benefits: We're taking more than 1,000 different benefit plans for teachers and education workers and moving them to a handful of provincial trusts. I think that it would be interesting to the member opposite to know that for years, from the time I was a school trustee, from the time that the Minister of Education was a school trustee, there has been a conversation in the education sector about how to rationalize the benefits packages across the province. That will save money, and that's why making that bid was so important.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This is at least \$300 million taken out of the education budget. That is not a rounding error. I know the Premier is not an accountant, but that's \$300 million more than she told this House. This is also, of course, the same Premier who told us the cancelled gas

plants were only \$40 million before we found out the true cost was \$1.2 billion. She is cutting demonstration schools across this province—special-ed cuts everywhere. Parents are fundraising for basic necessities in our classrooms.

I ask the Premier: What does \$300 million in education funding mean to her? Because it certainly doesn't mean pizzas and popcorn to me.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, let me just—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry; I didn't recognize you, Premier.

Carry on, please.

Interjection: I barely recognize her, too.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just say that the changes in the benefits are changes that have been talked about in the sector for many years, because when the school boards were amalgamated, when the funding model changed in this province at the hands of the previous government, it only made sense to talk about how there could be savings in those benefits plans.

Finally, we've gotten to the point where we can do that, where those benefit plans can be amalgamated. There can be changes that will save money to the system. It will actually lower the cost of benefit plans through the power of bulk negotiation. It only makes sense. I actually would have thought that this is the kind of efficiency and savings that that party would support.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The Premier of Ontario just had the audacity to look at this assembly and say that she found \$300 million in efficiencies when it cost more than net zero; it cost \$300 million. You can't trust this government anymore when they tell us it's going to cost one thing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

The chippiness is pretty high and I can read it, so I'm going to start looking at individuals.

Carry on, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The power worker deals had a net-zero deal until we found out that it was \$87 million more to buy Hydro One shares. The teachers' union deal was supposed to be net zero until we found out it's at least \$300 million more. You have one job and that is to find net zeros in this government in order to balance the deficit, which you have no objective of doing.

I would like to understand, from the Premier of Ontario—you have assigned somebody in the Treasury Board to find net-zero deals; you failed at every turn. What is the Deputy Premier's job anyway if she can't find deals here?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm delighted to answer this question.

There were a thousand different benefit plans. Some of those benefit plans might have had 15 or 20 people in them. They were extraordinarily expensive. We have been talking about this problem in education since I was the president of the public school boards, but we had no legal authority to do anything about it to bring everybody together. For the first time in this round of bargaining, because we had the authority to negotiate centrally, we actually have the ability to bring 1,000 inefficient benefit plans into five or six pools. But when you set things up like that, there's an upfront investment—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated. It's not helpful to hear people using anything other than titles or ridings, and I'm going to put my foot down on that.

New question.

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Mr. Todd Smith: My question is for the Minister of Education this morning. Over the last six weeks or so, Speaker, I've received all kind of letters, e-mails, phone calls and visits of support for Sagonaska Demonstration School in Belleville and the other demonstration schools in Ontario. I've heard countless success stories from kids who didn't think they had a future before going to these schools, and now they're breaking down barriers and reaching their potential at post-secondary institutions across Ontario.

A few weeks ago I met Chris, who is a grade 8 student reading at a grade 1 level. After just a few months in the program, he was back at his proper grade level when it came to reading. He was looking forward to going back to his home school and being a successful student at his grade level.

In spite of success stories like that, the minister won't commit to Sagonaska serving students next year. I understand the minister's going to be in Belleville this evening at Sagonaska. Will she finally commit to the school's future, or will she give parents and staff the same non-answer she's been given the House for weeks?

Hon. Liz Sandals: As I've said many times, there is a consultation ongoing, and we have not made any decisions. Apparently, the members opposite know what the decision is, which is really quite mystical, because I don't know.

I'm consulting because we want to find out how we can ensure that thousands of children in Ontario who are reading below grade level can benefit from the sorts of programs that go on in the demonstration schools. We're not arguing about whether the demonstration school programs are successful; what we're bemoaning is the fact that there are thousands of children in Ontario who can't read. How do we solve the fact that thousands can't read?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Speaker, back to the minister: They've capped enrolment. They're not even accepting enrolment for next year. They're sending the teachers,

who are seconded to these schools, back to their home schools.

The minister has clearly mastered the five Ds of question period: dodge, duck, dip, dive and dodge. That's what she's doing on a continual basis here at Queen's Park. I've got another one for her: demand. The parents of Ontario's most vulnerable students are demanding an answer. They're going to be standing in front of the minister this evening demanding an answer to the future for their kids, a future that can best be provided by keeping Sagonaska school open. That's a future that this government and this minister are putting in doubt.

I've got another D for her: This whole process has been a disgrace.

Interjection: Disaster.

Mr. Todd Smith: It has been a disaster. It has been despicable, because the minister will not give an answer as to why enrolment has been cancelled. Will she stand up before these parents, students and staff tonight and tell them there will be demonstration schools—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Just a gentle reminder that when I stand, you sit.

Minister?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I agree that there are a lot of people who are demanding answers, but some of the people who are demanding answers are the parents of children who don't have an opportunity to move away from home, to attend a residential school and to get remedial reading programs.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The question was asked by the member from Prince Edward–Hastings, and I'm sure you're going to listen.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Those parents are also demanding an answer. We know that there are a lot of children who have very severe learning disabilities. It's important to understand that this isn't all children with learning disabilities. These are children with very severe learning disabilities, of average intelligence or above, who are many, many grade levels behind in terms of their ability to read. We need to figure out how to deliver programs that work to all those children.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question: the leader of the third party.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Speaker?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, sorry. Final supplementary: the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Back to the minister: Recently I met with a courageous constituent from my riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex named Katie. She was diagnosed with a severe learning disability, and her reading level had not progressed beyond grade 3. After six months at the Amethyst Demonstration School in London, she is reading slightly above a grade 7 level. The school has given Katie the confidence to believe in herself, but she's worried that the government is considering closing her

school. Katie said, "If I was not given the opportunity to attend a demonstration school, I would have struggled through school and felt like a failure."

Please don't devastate these families, Minister.

To the minister: Can the minister assure Katie and her parents that her demonstration school in London will be open in September?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I apologize to the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex for losing track.

Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I think what we need to do is talk to all the Katies in the province who are having challenges reading and tell all the Katies in the province—right now, there's a maximum of 40 children at each of the four demonstration schools.

Interjection: It's capped.

Hon. Liz Sandals: The member opposite says that that's capped, but in fact there are less than 40 children at each of the demonstration schools because that was how many qualified for the very specific criteria. So we have less than 160 children in the entire province who are getting the benefit of these very strong remedial reading programs. We need to make sure that we look after all the Katies in the province who need similar remedial programs.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier.

Seniors' organizations from across Ontario have written to the Premier; I'm sure she has received the letter. They said, "We are asking you to cancel the fee increases for seniors and uphold the principle of universality for our health care system."

Will the Premier listen to the nearly 60 organizations who have written to her and cancel her plan to increase the cost of prescription drugs for seniors?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the leader of the third party is very aware that there is a regulation that has been posted and that there is a consultation going on right now. Those organizations will be, obviously, very interested in giving us feedback, and we will be listening very carefully to them.

The leader of the third party also knows that our policy that was in our budget means that 173,000 more seniors will pay no deductible. Seniors who paid a deductible previously will pay no deductible. That was the intention of the plan.

We've said that on the second part of the plan, we were going to be listening to people as the regulation was posted, and if we didn't get that part right, then we would adjust it. I think the leader of the third party knows that. We've said that repeatedly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Earlier this month, I asked the Premier whether she believed in universal health care. That means that if you need care, you can get it, no matter who you are and no matter what your income is. She

said yes. But what she is doing and what she just spoke about a moment ago is moving in exactly the opposite direction of universality.

Ontario seniors put it pretty bluntly in the letter that they sent the Premier. They said that she is abandoning this principle and “dismantling universality.”

Will this Premier do the right thing and cancel her plan to nearly double prescription costs for seniors?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: There is no stronger defender of universal health care in this province than our Premier, Mr. Speaker, and she will remain that way.

When it comes to seniors, evidence of that is that our seniors in this province have by far the lowest out-of-pocket expenses for drugs. It averages \$277 per annum for our seniors in this province. Let's go to Manitoba, where the average out-of-pocket cost is \$982 per year; or Saskatchewan, \$884 per year; or in British Columbia, \$615; or in Alberta, where it's \$613, more than twice what it is in this province.

We have the lowest out-of-pocket cost to our seniors because we are so generous to our seniors when it comes to providing the drugs that they need, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, this health minister can stand in his place and spout rhetoric, but actions speak louder than words.

I know for a fact that seniors across Ontario are worried about the Premier's plan to nearly double their drug costs. Today, nearly 60 organizations wrote to the Premier to tell her to cancel this plan.

Our Queen's Park offices and our constituency offices have been getting letters and emails and phone calls from worried seniors. I'll bet that every Liberal backbencher is getting the same calls and emails and letters as we are on this side of the House, and they know what that means for their jobs if they ignore those seniors.

The Premier has acknowledged that she has made a mistake. Will she do the right thing for seniors and cancel her plan to increase their prescription drug costs?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, it's not surprising that the NDP doesn't support our efforts to move 173,000 more seniors so they pay no annual deductible because here's their record when they were in power: They removed coverage for over 230 drugs from the Ontario Drug Benefit Program, over 10% of all drugs on the formulary at that time. All that the health minister at that time would say is that these drugs would be available to low-income seniors for reasonable prices at pharmacies.

They closed 24% of acute hospital beds. They closed 13% of mental health beds across this province.

In their last budget, in 1995, they reduced hospital funding by 1%, which was the second year in a row of reducing total health care funding.

We don't need to take lessons from the NDP. Their government was a disaster when it came to health care.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. But I have to say that what we don't support on this side of the House in the NDP benches is the abandonment of the universal health care system in this province by that government.

The Premier has received a letter that is signed by the Alliance of Seniors—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Well, there's going to be. The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs is now on notice. Anyone else want to comment?

Leader.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier has received a letter that has been signed by the Alliance of Seniors, local health coalitions, CARP chapters, Jewish, Chinese and Tamil seniors' associations, unions and retiree associations.

Will this Premier tell these groups how many seniors will see their drug costs nearly double?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I will say that I really do understand that it serves the leader of the third party's political purposes to set a fire where there isn't one, Mr. Speaker. The reality is that our budget removes all costs for drugs from 173,000 students. There was a second part to that—

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Seniors.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Seniors, sorry; I'm talking about seniors. It removes the cost of drugs from 173,000 more seniors.

We've said that in terms of the deductible, we would consult and we would look at that. If we got the threshold wrong, we would change it. That's the process we're undergoing right now.

The leader of the third party knows that. She knows that seniors have an opportunity to give us feedback, and we've said we will change it, Mr. Speaker, if we got it wrong.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's not just myself, as the leader of the Ontario New Democrats, that is concerned about this. It's 60 seniors' organizations that are setting a fire, and that's what the Premier needs to pay attention to. The Premier just isn't listening to Ontarians, once again. First it was the decision to sell Hydro One, even though everybody knows that's a bad idea, and now it's her plan for seniors' drugs.

Unless the Premier cancels her plan, potentially millions of seniors in Ontario are going to see their drug costs shoot through the roof. Seniors' groups are telling her to cancel this plan because it will undermine the fundamental principles that our health care system has been built on in this province and in this country.

Can the Premier tell Ontarians what happened to the basic idea that government should be listening to people and governing for all Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Listening to people is exactly what we did, which is why 173,000 more seniors will not pay any deductible. That is exactly what we did.

Now, as I have said, there is a regulation in place. There is comment on the regulation that we are receiving right now. We have said that if we didn't get that second part of the initiative right, we will change the threshold. But we will not do that because the NDP is ranting at us in an irrational way, when we've already said that we're going to consult on this. We're going to look at it and if we got it wrong, we'll change it.

The leader of the third party, for her own political reasons, can ramp up the rhetoric. She can pretend that somehow this is a cause that she has championed. Mr. Speaker, 173,000 seniors in this province will pay no more deductible. We will make a change if that's necessary. We will listen to the people of the province. We will listen to the seniors who are affected. We will not follow the lead of the NDP.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I know that this Premier doesn't like the fact that we have a democratic process here and the opposition has a role, but that's actually the truth and she's going to have to get used to it.

The Premier admitted that this plan was a mistake. She's being revisionist now by saying that she actually listened to people—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: She's being revisionist now in saying that she actually listened to people, when everybody knows she threw this into her budget without listening to anybody because they had it written before they even started their budget consultations. Nobody knew that they were going to be increasing drug costs for seniors.

She admitted that the plan was a mistake. She's given herself until next Wednesday to start making changes. She said that if people spoke up, she'd make a change. Well, people are speaking up. Today's groups representing hundreds of thousands of seniors are telling the Premier that the Liberal plan is wrong.

Will she listen to Ontario seniors, cancel her plan to nearly double drug costs and uphold the core value that health care should be universal here in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I can understand why the NDP won't talk about and doesn't appear to support 170,000 more seniors who will go from paying a deductible of

\$100 per year to zero. They will actually be added to about 300,000 people who are currently in that position.

Mr. Paul Miller: You forgot about the other two million—\$19,000 is affluent? You've got to be kidding

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, second time.

Mr. Paul Miller: Disgraceful.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, when those 173,000 are added to the existing lowest-income seniors, almost half a million seniors out of the two million that are in this province will pay no annual deductible. That's nearly 25%.

But I understand why they don't support this. They didn't support us on the PSW wage increase—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

GOODWILL INDUSTRIES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is to the Minister of Labour.

Goodwill Toronto's bankruptcy filing shows that its 430 employees are owed \$4.2 million in severance and vacation pay. Mr. Speaker, they are unlikely to see a dime from the settlement.

Meanwhile, the outgoing CEO received all of her \$240,000 salary right up to the time she abandoned ship. By that time, the 11 board members were already gone. The Employment Standards Act is clear: The directors are personally liable for employees' vacation pay. They cannot run from this.

Will the minister guarantee that Goodwill's employees will get the money they are owed from the runaway board of directors?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the honourable member for that question.

Certainly it concerns us all here in the province of Ontario when we see an incident like that happen. At the Ministry of Labour we have an Employment Standards Act that's administered by the group. We go in in situations like this and we ensure the people who have worked hard for that money are paid. What we have is an excellent track record of collecting funds. Obviously from time to time there are those people we can't collect from. I can tell you that work is ongoing with this file. We expect it to come to a successful conclusion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Back to the Minister of Labour: Goodwill's board allowed the charity to run into the ground. Their decision to resign and abandon Toronto's most vulnerable is nothing short of cowardly. Chief among the dodgers is David Wai, director of design and policy at the ORPP Implementation Secretariat. Perhaps the minister responsible for the ORPP met Mr. Wai through the outgoing Goodwill CEO, her former colleague at Toronto Community Housing.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister throw the book at Goodwill's board members for unpaid wages, or will there be a special deal for friends of Liberal cabinet ministers?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, that question is beneath—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. I'm going to suggest to the member that he's desperately close to making an accusation that is not parliamentary. I'm going to let it go with the warning that those kinds of accusations are not acceptable in the House in terms of members of this place.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Speaker. I think most people in this House agree with you entirely in that ruling.

The federal government has got exclusive jurisdiction over bankruptcies and insolvencies and you know that. We have made our government's position known on—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark knows better and he has got to stop doing that. I'm not going to tolerate that anymore because I've been hearing some nicknames coming from him and it's not acceptable in this place.

Interjection: Nicknames?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes.

Carry on.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: The ministry provided funding to Goodwill and that funding was provided on a monthly basis. As soon as the ministry became aware of the program closures, all payments were stopped. We've connected a number of these individuals with new employment supports. I think the ministry and this government have done everything it could—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

STEEL INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Premier this morning.

Premier, the member from Sault Ste. Marie continues to publicly raise a thousand reasons why the province can't do anything but watch the steel industry in his community and its good-paying jobs dry up and blow away. But the mayor and council have asked this Premier and this government to act now, to avoid Essar Steel Algoma's operations from going down the exact same road as happened in Hamilton with US Steel's, or Stelco's, operation.

The Premier met with Chinese officials. She has met with the owners of Essar Steel overseas. Will the Premier meet with the mayor of a city in her province who is looking for help for thousands of members in his community?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question, and I just want to say that there is nobody who is working harder to make sure that the steel industry in Ontario is healthy than the member from Sault Ste. Marie—

nobody. Nobody. And I know that the people of Sault Ste. Marie know that. I know that the steel industry in Ontario knows that. The member for Sault Ste. Marie is a fierce advocate for the steel industry, Mr. Speaker, and he will continue to look for solutions.

As a government, we have a responsibility to look at the steel industry in Ontario in the context of the steel industry nationally and internationally. That's exactly the point the member for Sault Ste. Marie has made. I will meet with anyone who is interested, who has some solutions as to how we might resolve this issue.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Premier, nobody is listening to the question. With 8,000 jobs tied to the mills and another 8,000 pensioners, the failure of the steel mills for the people of Sault Ste. Marie is not an option. The mayor has asked the province to play a leading role in the restructuring process of Essar Steel.

Speaker, here's the question again: Does the Premier agree with her minister's comments? Is she prepared to meet local municipal leaders, the unions, pensioners, creditors and potential buyers to tell them that this province values steel manufacturing and sees a future for it in this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, let me say that this is a national issue, and it's an international issue. I think it's page 128 of the federal budget. Page 128 actually commits to take actions that we have been calling on the federal government to take: a recognition that the steel industry is critical to this country. It's critical to the supply chain of so many of the industries in Ontario. We recognize that, working in partnership with the federal government, there may be a solution to this.

But Mr. Speaker, one thing that is not going to work is talking down the steel industry in Ontario. Make no mistake: We are going to do everything in our power to retain the steel industry in Ontario and support it in conjunction with the federal government.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

WATER QUALITY

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is for Minister Murray, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Yesterday, March 22, marked annual international World Water Day. Since 1993, it is held annually as a means of focusing attention on the importance of fresh water and advocating for the sustainable management of fresh water resources. It's been estimated that 650 million people, or 10% of the world's population, do not have access to safe water, putting them at risk of infectious diseases and premature deaths.

We are extremely fortunate in Ontario and Canada to have access to clean water. That's why on World Water

Day we all have a role to play in protecting and restoring our waterways.

Can the minister please inform the House about some of the work his ministry is doing to preserve clean water in our province?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes, yesterday was World Water Day. I also want to start by thanking the member for the leadership she has been undertaking. As you know, the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan is the model on which the Great Lakes Protection Act was advanced.

I want to thank my friends the ministers of OMAFRA and MNRF, our two key partner ministries in implementing the Great Lakes Protection Act. The guardian council had its first meeting today with nine chiefs and grand chiefs. It had AMO. It had my friend Don McCabe from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. It was 35 people who spent yesterday afternoon looking at priorities and solutions to improve the quality of the Great Lakes.

We are very quickly moving on this Legislature's leadership in passing the Great Lakes Protection Act, and the first meeting yesterday was described by everybody as a great success.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you to the minister for that answer.

I've seen the efforts of the government in protecting our water resources close to my home, as he has stated. In my riding of Barrie, our government launched the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan in 2009. It remains the most comprehensive watershed-based legislated plan to reduce phosphorus pollution and improve water quality and fish habitat in Lake Simcoe.

In October, we released the five-year report that shows that the health of Lake Simcoe is improving. Also, last fall our government passed the Great Lakes Protection Act legislation. The Great Lakes account for 21% of the world's surface fresh water by volume. We must take care of them.

Can the minister please provide an update on our government's efforts in protecting the Great Lakes, one of our greatest natural resources?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We run something called the Great Lakes Guardian Community Fund, which funds almost 100 community projects across the Great Lakes and First Nations communities and municipalities. They're partnerships that are already developing. One of the presentations yesterday was from our friend Don McCabe, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the warden of Bruce county, who is also the mayor of Bruce-Kinloss. The member from Huron-Bruce will know this: They are doing a partnership right now around tiling that's going to significantly reduce the amount of nutrients going into the lake.

We now have a whole system of coordinated actions, and we're improving data collection on the lakes. Working with natural resources and forestry, we'll have better data on the quality of fish and invasive species as well as pesticides, pharmaceuticals and other problems—road salt in the lake. It's a great way to celebrate World Water Day.

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs: In his most recent budget, the Minister of Rural Affairs quietly suspended the Rural Economic Development Fund. It's a \$14-million program specifically for rural areas. What does this mean, Speaker? Kemptville's business retention and expansion program is in limbo—no access to the grant. Meaford's barn business co-operative is waiting for an answer. What about the Ontario Water Centre project in Clearwater?

Speaker, when will this minister do his job, halt the suspension and actually fight for people in rural Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Agriculture?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I do appreciate the question from the member from Haldimand-Norfolk this morning.

Indeed, I remember that party, when the previous Premier of Ontario announced the Drummond commission—the Drummond commission looked at all the business support programs in the province of Ontario—I remember they would stand up, day in and day out, and implement all the recommendations for the Drummond commission. One of those recommendations was to move all our business support programs under one umbrella.

That's exactly what we're doing with the RED program: We're moving it over to my colleague Minister Duguid under the Jobs and Prosperity Fund. People who were formerly supported by RED will now be able to make applications to the Jobs and Prosperity Fund, and we'll continue to invest in rural Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Again to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs: The minister once said, "With the help of the RED program, rural communities will be better positioned to attract investment, create jobs and sustain a highly skilled workforce." Despite the minister's obvious belief in the program, he suspended it.

However, when meeting with Oxford county farmers on February 22, the minister told them that the applications were "in the pipeline" and they would be reviewed shortly.

My question: Did the Minister of Rural Affairs not know that his government suspended his vital rural program, or does he simply not care what he tells people across rural Ontario?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Haldimand-Norfolk for asking me the supplementary.

We indeed certainly believe that the RED program is very important to rural Ontario. That's why we took the components of the RED program and, as the Drummond commission recommended, put it under one program, the Jobs and Prosperity Fund. We'll continue to look at those applications that are in the pipeline to make sure that they

are honoured because they have significant importance to rural communities.

I remind you, Mr. Speaker, that when they were in power they closed 32 ag offices right across the province of Ontario.

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Education.

A few weeks ago, the Legislature hosted students for the model Parliament. Seamus McKenna from Hamilton Mountain was one of them. Seamus has struggled throughout his school years due to a severe learning disability. Last September, things changed dramatically for him when he started attending the Trillium Demonstration School.

A couple of months ago, he took it upon himself to apply for the model Parliament program. It was an incredible achievement that neither he nor his family thought was possible. It's a striking testament to the value of our demonstration schools and the positive effects that they have for our most vulnerable kids.

Will the minister tell Seamus and other families across this province that their specialized schools will stay open?

1120

Hon. Liz Sandals: Once again, I'm pleased to respond to this question. Once again, no decisions have been made. We are reviewing the program, but what is very clear is that the program has been a success. We understand that.

This is one more example of a student who has fallen way, way behind—multiple grades—in terms of their reading. They have taken a very focused program at one of the demonstration schools. They have caught up in their reading, and they have been able to go back into the regular school with pride. We want that for more than just—about 150 is the enrolment right now in the four demonstration schools. We want that for more students.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: I think the minister just said that closing down programs will make it equally inaccessible. It doesn't make sense, Minister.

Last week, Seamus told me that tackling the required 400-word essay to apply for the model Parliament would never have been possible without access to the demonstration school programming. Attending Trillium gave Seamus the confidence to apply, even without telling the adults in his life.

Seamus is only one of the many students whom I've heard from on this important access to a specialized environment in the school, especially when this government continues to cut special education funding from school boards. Some \$22 million was taken away from various boards last year. Families and kids deserve better from this government.

I will ask again: Will the minister commit, today, to keeping these schools open?

Hon. Liz Sandals: First of all, the NDP does have a problem with the definition of cuts. Some \$22.5 billion two years in a row is not a cut, especially when there were fewer students this year than the previous year. That actually means we spent more per pupil.

But what I do want to do is congratulate Seamus on his wonderful achievement in being accepted to the model school. Students in the demonstration schools describe to me the wonderful experience of being able to read a novel for the first time in their lives, of being able to read a text book for the first time in their lives and about being able to write an essay for the first time in their lives. We want more students to have that experience, and that's why we're focusing on the consultation process, to find out how to improve the experience for more students.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: My question is for the Minister of Energy.

We know that openness and transparency are key to good government. In fact, the more we know about how we are doing, the better a job we can do to create a strong, competitive environment for people and businesses in Ontario to thrive. In my riding of Halton, there are dozens of new and emerging businesses opening their doors all the time. For them to be successful, they must have strong, useful information, so they can plan for the future.

Yesterday the quarterly Ontario Energy Report was posted. It provides a wealth of information and data about electricity, oil and natural gas in the province. This is valuable information for Ontario businesses. The document included the reporting of industrial electricity prices for all Canadian provinces and US states. This is the first time that the Ontario Energy Board has provided jurisdictional comparison data.

Minister, can you please tell us more about this additional information on electricity pricing?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member from Halton for the question.

The Ontario government is committed to being the most open, transparent and accountable government in the country, and opening up government data supports this commitment.

We're proud to say that the IESO has made North American jurisdictional data for industrial electricity prices available through yesterday's release of the Ontario Energy Report. In their 2016 Emerging Stronger report, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce proposed enhancing the transparency of electricity pricing. We thank them for their helpful work. This report provides more information on industrial electricity prices in Ontario and a transparent comparison that demonstrates how competitive Ontario's industrial rates are within North America. We're proud to have made that possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I want to thank the minister for that answer and for his hard work in the energy

sector. This information will be extremely helpful to the business community and other stakeholders.

I've spoken with numerous Halton residents and business owners about the cost of electricity and they often ask for more information. People want to understand how and why rates change.

Measuring and putting our electricity rate into context through these comparisons is key to better understanding the electricity system and how it works. By improving access to vital data, we help businesses grow, spur innovation and solve problems. By increasing transparency, accountability and engagement, the result is better policy, better programs and better outcomes for all Ontarians.

Minister, can you please share with the House what the results of this comparison indicate?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, the results of this comparison indicate that our hard work to maintain competitive electricity rates is showing results. Industrial rates in northern Ontario are among the lowest in Canada and lower than 49 American states. Industrial rates in southern Ontario are lower than in Michigan, Wisconsin, New Jersey, California and below the American average.

While other jurisdictions are still burning dirty coal for two thirds of their power, our government is proud that we have achieved competitive rates while undertaking the largest climate change initiative in North America. The numbers are publicly available through the Ontario Energy Report website.

The members opposite should recognize these facts and stop discouraging industry investments in Ontario. The opposition may choose to talk Ontario down, but we will continue to work with our partners and industry to build this province up.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

We understand your government is prepared to repeat history with Ornge, as Ornge Air signs yet another lease with AgustaWestland, the same company under criminal investigation by the OPP anti-rackets branch.

For the past 13 years, your government has wasted billions of dollars on shady contracts. From SAMS to eHealth to Ornge, money is being squandered instead of being invested where it is needed the most: making our seniors' drug care affordable and increasing access to long-term-care beds.

I'd like to know from the minister, how does she feel about this continued waste and mismanagement at a time when her government is looking to double the cost of seniors' drugs, when 24,000 seniors are without access to a nursing bed, and when she has yet to find money to rebuild 30,000 outdated beds? Through you, Mr. Speaker, I ask: What is her plan to address these glaring and negative impacts to our seniors?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: There were so many elements to that question, I hope you'll forgive me if I focus on one or two. I hope they're the ones that you intended, or we could, perhaps, in the supplementary—but again, as I said earlier this week, when it comes to Ornge, we're in a new regime, a new culture at Ornge as well, where patient satisfaction is as good as it has ever been. It's actually excellent in terms of the patient experience, those 18,000 individuals who depend on air transport, either fixed-wing or helicopter transport, across this province. We have a brand new board; we have a new governance structure, a new level of accountability and transparency that is so effective at providing that important care that people need at a time of crisis.

But I would hope that in the supplementary question, there is some guidance to me on specifically which issue the member opposite would like me to focus on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Mr. Speaker, I'll make it simple: Maybe you should start respecting seniors.

Last week, I held a media conference here at Queen's Park to repeat my call for you to issue a plan of action on when and where you will build the needed beds that your government has promised and to halt your government's plan to double the cost of seniors' drugs.

If you denounced the waste and billions spent on failed programs like eHealth, Ornge and SAMS, started managing your budgets properly and didn't spend \$12 billion a year in interest payments, then you would have the money for the seniors' drug plan, and money to build the needed nursing home beds and eliminate the shameful long-term-care wait-list.

Mr. Speaker, how can this minister defend the Ornge contract and the amount spent on interest to support the government's overspending in the face of 24,000 seniors without access to a nursing bed and seniors facing nearly doubled prescription drug costs?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

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Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, apart from the \$12 billion over the next decade that we're spending on capital investments for new hospitals, apart from the 345 million new dollars that we're investing in our hospitals—over one billion new dollars in health care—here's what we're doing for our seniors: an additional \$250 million each year and growing for home and community care; \$75 million over three years for community-based hospice and palliative care. We're expanding, as the member referenced, 173,000 more seniors going from \$100 deductible for their drugs to \$0 deductible. The shingles vaccine: Making that available is a savings estimated at \$170 per senior between 65 and 70 years of age. We're removing the debt retirement charge. We're adding \$10 million into our long-term-care homes for behavioural supports because we're seeing more dementia, including Alzheimer's.

There are many, many things that we're doing for our seniors so that we're providing them with the services they require and deserve.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre.

The Premier knows that the Ontario Heritage Act and other laws protect archaeological and burial sites in our province. Yet, while the Premier was Minister of Transportation, she allowed the construction of the new Allandale GO station in Barrie; she allowed the digging through the ossuary, an area containing hundreds of bodies in one of the oldest Huron-Wendat villages found to date.

We have strict laws in Ontario to protect these sites. They carry severe penalties: millions of dollars and jail terms. What is the Premier going to do to hold to account the people who have done wrong and allowed the desecration of this historical First Nations site?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I want to first start by saying that our government has a lot of respect for the heritage and for the aboriginal community here in the province of Ontario and will continue to work to make sure that we continue to build a strong relationship. I also know that the Minister of Government and Consumer Services will want to weigh in on this issue.

I want to just say that we're the first government in 30 years to change the heritage act here in the province of Ontario. We made those changes to make sure that we brought in the consultation with the aboriginal community.

At any given moment, when we find human remains or any heritage-significant pieces through the archaeological process, it automatically goes to the third phase. We're currently in that phase right now, and it's a little bit too early to say what the next step is.

But we will make sure that this file is handled in a very respectful way, and I would like to thank the member for the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: There have been seven—count them, seven—archaeological reports done on this rare Huron-Wendat burial site, which is now the Allandale GO station. All of them said not to go ahead and to look for burial first.

But instead of taking these reports into account, the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport looked at the one report that said, "Go ahead and dig." They ignored all of the others. They ignored their own work. They ignored their own letter that they wrote to the city of Barrie saying that this site needed further archaeological work because of the artifacts on site.

Speaker, the government broke their own law. There should be consequences to that.

Why was this government so negligent in their actions and when will they hold the people to account, and, more importantly, when will they fix this wrong? Chi meegwetch, Speaker.

Hon. Michael Coteau: To the Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. David Orazietti: I'm pleased to take the supplementary question.

The determination as to whether or not the area is an aboriginal people's burial ground is made by the registrar of cemeteries, and we obviously take this issue very seriously. This decision is informed by archaeological reports that are currently being reviewed. They're being reviewed by MTCS, my colleague Minister Coteau's ministry.

We will not be accepting the final archaeological report until we are convinced that all of the content meets the highest archaeological standards and they've all been complied with in Ontario.

The former registrar, Michael D'Mello, was in contact with Chief Sharon Stinson Henry of the Chippewas of Rama First Nation and with legal counsel, as well. The current registrar, Nancy Watkins, is reviewing the file and speaking to them as well. My staff have been in contact with the registrar. We are ensuring that all processes that are required to be followed under the legislation will be followed.

SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

We know that children do better in school when they have a full stomach. Research, and my own experience as a teacher, demonstrates that hunger affects kids' ability to learn. But we also know that some children are not able to eat a full breakfast at home before school starts. Other families are not able to send a full lunch and snacks to school with their kids.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please share with us how her ministry is supporting schoolchildren in Mississauga-Brampton South and across Ontario with access to nutritious meals and snacks?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'd like to thank the member from Mississauga-Brampton South for this very important question.

I'm very proud to say that the Ontario Student Nutrition Program helps support breakfast, snacks and lunch programs in schools in a wide range of communities and locations across our province. This program plays a very important role in supporting healthy development of children and youth and readying them to learn.

Over the past two years, the province has invested an additional \$13.3 million to expand and enhance this very important program. The investments are part of our Ontario Healthy Kids Strategy program and part of our Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy.

When fully implemented at the end of the school year, the funding is expected to provide approximately 89,000

more children and youth with access to nutritious breakfast programs in 540 higher-needs schools. There will be more students to be served, coming forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I would like to thank the minister for her answer.

This program is certainly impressive, and I'm glad to hear that it helped over three quarters of a million children and youth last year. This program, as I mentioned, clearly helps kids focus on their learning in the classroom.

It also sounds like the Student Nutrition Program plays an important role in poverty reduction in our province. We know that some First Nations communities experience higher-than-average levels of poverty. Mr. Speaker, can the minister share with us the steps her ministry is taking to provide nutritious food to First Nations youth in our schools?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Again, I want to thank the member for the question.

She's absolutely right. We know that many First Nations communities have difficulty accessing affordable, nutritious food, and that is why we are investing more than \$4 million by 2017 to support student nutrition programs in First Nations educational settings. By expanding the Student Nutrition Program, more First Nations children and youth will have access to nutritious food that supports their learning and healthy development.

Over 60 First Nations communities have worked with their leadership to develop new program models that will suit the needs of their communities and incorporate cultural practices into the program, which I think we all agree is very important. New First Nations student nutrition programs will be phased in over the next two school years, and we're very, very pleased to support this program.

PESTICIDES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is for the environment minister.

The Liberal government has banned the use of a pesticide that farmers rely on across Ontario, while making the claim that this measure will save bees. But a scientific study released by Health Canada and the US Environmental Protection Agency earlier this year found that using this pesticide for seed treatment actually poses no potential risk to bees. Those are the facts; that is the evidence. Yet the Liberals keep on with their neonic ban, at a cost of \$630 million to Ontario farmers.

I have to ask the minister: Has he even reviewed this scientific evidence released by Health Canada, or is he choosing just to ignore it?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Let's just correct a few facts here. One, there is no ban. There are bans in the world. We chose not to ban it because we're taking a precautionary approach and we realize that there are farmers who need this.

I think all of us in this House would agree that with a systemic neurotoxin that is quite toxic, putting it in

places in Ontario where there are none of the pests it controls doesn't make much sense.

1140

There are several PMRA studies, and at the same time, there is a US EPA study that showed that over 50% of the non-managed bee losses are related to that. This is one of four stressors: varroa mites, viruses and diseases, climate change and weather impacts, and food deserts. Bees right now are under more stresses than they ever have been.

Quebec went through the same process that we went through and introduced the exact same approach we have, and that is increasingly the Ontario approach that's being recognized—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm going to paraphrase: No, he did not read the Health Canada study.

Again, back to the minister: This minister claims to care about evidence. In fact, he has even told his Twitter followers, "I have argued for evidence-based decision-making throughout my professional life." But when presented with scientific evidence released by Health Canada that challenges the foundation of this minister's neonic ban, he has chosen to ignore the facts. The minister's refusal to review the evidence contradicts his own statements and is, frankly, anti-science.

Will the minister, who is not a scientist, please explain why he thinks he knows better than a team of scientific experts at Health Canada and the US Environmental Protection Agency?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: One of the things that we feel very strongly about on this side of the House is that you don't cherry-pick science. There are over 1,000—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's never too late to ask for attention, nor ask people not to come back.

Carry on.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: There are well over 1,000 major studies that have been done by Sussex, Purdue, Minnesota university, the US EPA and PMRA. If the member has reviewed the Auditor General's and the federal environment commissioner's review of the PMRA studies, she will probably realize that I'm not the only one who's raised some questions about it.

The vast majority of science suggests that there is a problem here. In fact, Ontario, Quebec, the Netherlands, the United States and some of the western provinces—

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: They don't seem to want to hear the facts.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, your time is up.

GLORIA RICHARDS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As a reminder, I do have a few people who have points of order before we dismiss. I'm going to deal with them right away.

The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound on a point of order.

Mr. Bill Walker: I would just like to remind members and their staff of the reception this afternoon from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. in the legislative library to honour Gloria Richards and her 42 years of public service to the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'd like to thank the member for stepping on my announcement.

VISITORS

Ms. Soo Wong: I have two guests visiting us at Queen's Park. My good friend Eden Gajraj and his son Adnan Gajraj are visiting Queen's Park.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask your indulgence to welcome Dr. Mili Roy, the mother of our page Sohan Van de Mosselaer, who's with us this week and the following week. Joining her is his sister Maya Van de Mosselaer in the public gallery.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Jeff Leal: I just wanted to correct my record in response to the question and supplementary from the member for Haldimand–Norfolk. In fact, it was 42 agriculture offices that were closed, not 32.

VISITORS

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I would like to welcome—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question period is over. I'm trying to entertain people's points of order. Thank you.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I would like to welcome page Terry Kuang's mother, Yolanda Zhang, and father, Gary Kuang, to Queen's Park. Welcome to Queen's Park.

GLORIA RICHARDS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am going to double announce it, but with an announcement that there was an email sent to all members. You need to check. I was told no, but I've checked and was told they were sent, so it's a matter of making sure the communication breakdown is not there.

However, more importantly, I'd like to remind the members that the retirement party for Gloria Richards is today at 1 p.m. on the third floor of the library. She would love to see you all.

She has all kinds of stories. I will tell you that we're working on her book. We're going to have some good storytelling.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Former Speaker Edighoffer is here, in the Speaker's gallery. Welcome to the former Speaker. We're glad you're with us.

He got the email; I don't know about you guys.

BANGLADESH INDEPENDENCE DAY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Beaches–East York on a point of order.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Sorry, Speaker, I meant to stand earlier.

This afternoon at 12, we're raising the Bangladesh flag on the front lawn. I welcome all members to attend. It's the most-spoken second language in my community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay, I think we got everything.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1146 to 1500.

ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Transportation on a point of order.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I have a message from the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, the Lieutenant Governor, signed by her own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2017, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly. Toronto, March 21, 2016.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests? The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, what a surprise.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know it is.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm not going to waste your time—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, go ahead.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thanks. I'd like to welcome former Speaker of the House and former member of provincial Parliament for Elgin–Middlesex–London, Mr. Steve Peters, and your brother Joe, Mr. Speaker.

There are so many people here from St. Thomas—it's unbelievable that they—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's why I'm allowing it.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Now you're deferring to me.

Ms. Soo Wong: I think you should sit down.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Sit down? I can't sit down.

Could the people from St. Thomas and Elgin stand and be welcomed? The Cosens—

Applause.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I do have to point out, Mr. Speaker, my favourite Liberal in the world. Mrs. Peters is here today, and I just want to point her out especially for being here, and I appreciate the time—and definitely Don Cosens and Mark Cosens, who are also here. I'd take the time to ramble off everyone, but I'm taking up too much time. I'm sorry, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Very well done. Quite frankly, all of us have those favourite other party members. That's a nice touch.

Further introductions?

I do want to mention my other brother, Joe, just to be on the record of Hansard. Thanks, Joe, for being here.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to take this opportunity to speak about Karol Jozef Wojtyla, known to the world as Pope Saint John Paul.

April 2 of each year has been designated as a day in his honour in Ontario. Through his tireless efforts, John Paul II is recognized as helping to end Communist rule in his native Poland and eventually throughout all of Europe.

He was born in Poland on May 18, 1920, and served as Pope of the Catholic church from October 16, 1978, until his death on April 2, 2005. It is one of those dates that I have in my memory, and I know exactly where I was when the sad news was delivered.

He dedicated his life and papacy to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights. John Paul II significantly improved the Catholic church's relations with Judaism, Islam, the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Anglican Communion.

His love for young people brought him to establish World Youth Day. The 19 World Youth Days celebrated during his pontificate brought together millions of young people from all over the world.

He was one of the most travelled world leaders in history, visiting 129 countries during his pontificate, including Canada. I remember sleeping outside in the rain in Downsview, waiting for his arrival and Mass, when I was 13 years old.

John Paul II's beatification mass took place in St. Peter's Square on May 1, 2011, and he was canonized on April 27, 2014.

Mr. Speaker, as a Canadian of Polish heritage, I am proud to rise and honour Pope Saint John Paul II. His life and legacy will always be remembered.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: This past week, I travelled to a number of communities in northwestern Ontario where I heard from front-line health care providers and First Nations leadership about the most pressing and urgent health issues facing northerners. People are struggling right across this province, but I have to say that in the north, it is different. In the north, we have a patchwork system where services, if provided, are provided in silos across ministries and governments, with huge gaping holes left in between.

There are wait-lists so long for children who have experienced trauma that it effectively shuts the door to effective treatment and traps them into a lifetime of suffering. Diabetes is rampant and so accelerated that, within five years of a diabetes-related amputation, the patient will receive another amputation or be dead. A doctor told me that 34% of pregnant women who she treats in Sioux Lookout are addicted to opioids.

Funding is available for drug treatment, but not housing or clean water. Autism care is limited and all children with special needs in the far north are either left to the wayside or removed from their community. Most tragically, children as young as 10 are committing suicide. I heard from a doctor who described these failings in tears. Another nurse spoke about how it wears on her soul.

Speaker, we live in a prosperous province and we are all Ontarians. Northerners deserve a cohesive provincial strategy to address northern health care and for this government to step up to the plate and deliver on its commitment to treat First Nations people and all northerners with the dignity and respect afforded to all Ontarians.

SYRIAN REFUGEES

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: As members of this House are aware, our government committed to bringing 10,000 refugees from Syria, and some are now calling my community of Kingston and the Islands their new home.

To welcome them in the most Canadian way possible, Dr. Waji Khan from Cataraqui Woods Dentistry donated 100 tickets to the most quintessential Canadian pastime: watching a hockey game. I would also like to thank Dario Paolo and his team for organizing this event.

It was an unforgettable moment for us, seeing them watch their very first game—in a place where hockey was born, nonetheless—and sharing the excitement and energy of our sport spirit and traditions. Their faces were something to behold. The night was only made better by our Kingston Frontenacs' incredible skill and talent, resulting in a 5-2 win in their last game of the season. Awesome!

I also want to extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation to all of the local partners who have been coordinating their efforts and pooling resources to help sponsor families and enhance settlement efforts, such as the staff and volunteers at Kingston Community Health Centres, Kingston Immigration Partnership, Immigrant Services Kingston and Area, United Way KFLA, the city of Kingston, the Canadian Forces base, our school boards and so many more.

Initiatives such as this are ones that make our community the best place to call home, and it makes me immensely proud to be representing the generous and compassionate constituents of Kingston and the Islands.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good afternoon, Speaker.

Families across this province are angry at this government's decision to double the drug cost for 92% of all seniors. At a recent Royal Canadian Legion convention held in Dunchurch, North Bay's Preston Quirt and Jim Thompson brought forth a motion expressing their displeasure. It reads:

"Whereas the proposed Ontario budget will have a drastic effect on the health and lifestyle of our senior population and may force more seniors into poverty;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the members of the Royal Canadian Legion attending the Zone H2 convention, strongly urge the provincial government to reconsider the changes to the Ontario Drug Benefit Program in their proposed budget."

Debra Cooper Burger, chair of OANHSS, a seniors' organization, was clear yesterday when she told our finance committee that seniors will be forced to choose between buying food instead of medication. Our seniors rely on their medications to stay healthy and out of hospital. Our most vulnerable deserve better.

I call on the Premier to stop making seniors pay for her government's waste, mismanagement and scandal, and to repeal the seniors' drug tax.

EARLTON FARM SHOW

Mr. John Vanthof: It's the season before planting season: It is farm meeting and farm show season. It was an honour for me to attend the March Classic farm meeting put on by Grain Farmers of Ontario.

But there is one farm show that's near and dear to my heart, and that's the Earlton Farm Show. It's held on April 15 and 16. If people are interested in agriculture in northern Ontario, a good place to learn about that is the farm show. I would like to give a shout-out to Melanie Koch; there are lots of volunteers there, but she's the backbone of that show. It's fantastic.

1510

For those of you in southern Ontario who don't know how to get there, I'll give you some directions: Go up the 400, up 11, and you get to North Bay. That might be the gateway to northern Ontario, but it's not the gateway to agriculture yet. You'll drive through an hour and a half of pristine northern Ontario; you'll think you're in a Tom Thomson painting. Farmers, don't be depressed; some people like that. Then you'll crest this hill, and you'll see 200,000-plus acres of beautiful agricultural land. Keep going. You'll drive by the co-op feed mill, you'll drive by the Grant elevator, you'll drive by the Tem Grain elevator, you'll drive by Thornloe Cheese, you'll drive by Green Tractors, and then there will be a sign at Earlton to turn left at Koch elevators, but you might miss that because you'll be so busy counting the bins and looking at the equipment. You might miss that, so I advise you to go up another mile, do a U-turn at Brownlee farm equipment and come back and visit the show.

I hope to see you there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't know if it's parliamentary to correct a statement: that is, you would want a Lawren Harris painting because he comes from my riding.

CAMBRIDGE SELF-HELP FOOD BANK

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I wanted to talk about the Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank, whose mission is to help those in my community of Cambridge and North Dumfries township by offering not just food to those in need, but also support, all the while encouraging self-reliance through various programs and services.

One of these programs is Small Steps to Success, a program designed to help women overcome barriers to employment due to social, economic or educational hardships. I, myself, had the opportunity and the honour of speaking to this group of women and heard some inspiring stories. Working in conjunction with staff from the Cambridge YWCA, they focus on life skills, job search techniques, education and building healthy self-esteem.

Last weekend, the executive director, Pat Singleton, got into a Dr. Seuss-inspired hat for the second annual Pat in the Hat fundraiser at the Cambridge mall. I'm pleased to report that Pat sat in her hat for 31 hours, encouraging shoppers to contribute to this worthy cause, and, in all, raised \$45,000 for the Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank.

I want to honour the staff and the executive director of this incredible organization. They go above and beyond the call of duty. They are there at every community event. They inspire others to contribute and to help all those that are less fortunate in our communities. So many thanks to executive director Pat Singleton and some of the staff—Jeff Hunter, Bonnie Dion, June Anderson, and their other staff and volunteers.

SPREAD THE NET STUDENT CHALLENGE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Are you familiar with Plan Canada's Spread the Net Student Challenge? Ten years ago, Rick Mercer and Belinda Stronach founded the Spread the Net Student Challenge as a friendly competition between Canadian schools to raise funds for the purchase of bed nets to prevent the transmission of malaria. This year, more than 50 schools from across Canada participated and helped raise \$80,000 which will go towards the purchase of 8,000 bed nets.

Macville Public School in Caledon participated in this year's challenge after grade 8 student Clark Elliott watched the Rick Mercer Report that challenged students to get involved in this initiative. Clark thought that this was a great cause to get Macville Public School involved, and, wow, did they step up to the challenge. As a result of their efforts, Macville Public School, a school of only 247 students, raised \$11,454, the highest amount raised by any elementary school across Canada.

Rick Mercer's visit to Macville Public School congratulating them for their efforts will be featured on the Rick Mercer Report on March 29.

Once again, I want to congratulate and thank Clark Elliott and the students and staff at Macville Public School for supporting the Spread the Net Student Challenge. Well done.

COMMUNITY AWARDS

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I rise today to speak about an event held in celebration of International Women's Day in my riding of Davenport.

On March 7, my constituency office hosted an art gallery opening featuring works from the South Asian Women's Centre and Sistering. Both of these organizations provide vital services for women as they provide support, a place to talk about women's issues and a strong community network.

At the event, I was also able to recognize Gurbeen Bhasin and Isa Melo, recipients of the Leading Women, Leading Girls awards. This award, given by the minister responsible for women's issues, recognizes the women and girls who have taken a leadership role and made significant contributions in their communities.

Gurbeen Bhasin is the president and founder of Aangen Community Centre, a self-sustaining organization that provides vulnerable families in the community with immigration, counselling, housing, food and legal resources.

Isa Melo is the founder and editor of Etc&tal magazine, a periodic publication for Brazilian and Portuguese communities. This publication was awarded as the best ethnic magazine in Canada in 2011, 2012 and 2014.

I also want to take this time to personally thank the MPP for Brampton–Springdale, Harinder Mahli, for attending my event and engaging with the female community leaders about women's issues.

I am so proud to represent these fantastic leading women and organizations in Davenport.

CAREFIRST SENIORS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES ASSOCIATION

Ms. Soo Wong: This year marks the 40th anniversary of Carefirst Seniors and Community Services Association, a non-profit charitable organization headquartered in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, with nine satellite offices across Toronto, Peel and York region. This organization provides quality one-stop multi-services to over 10,000 seniors and adults with physical disabilities in the GTA annually.

Carefirst takes an interdisciplinary approach to deliver comprehensive preventive, primary, acute and long-term-care services in the community. This all-under-one-roof model allows frail seniors to remain independent and in a home as long as possible.

Besides the 40th anniversary, Carefirst recently moved into their 52,000-square-foot state-of-the-art building to better provide a variety of community-based programs like chronic disease management, adult day programs, elder abuse prevention and intervention, wellness programs, exercise classes, reducing seniors' isolation and a transitional care centre.

Like any successful organization, Carefirst has a dedicated staff of volunteers who are committed to providing quality social, health and supportive services to seniors and adults with disabilities.

I want to thank all the Carefirst staff and over 1,200 active volunteers for caring for their clients and putting their needs first.

GLORIA RICHARDS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we move on, between 1 o'clock and 3 o'clock, we had a very special occasion to honour someone I believe all members appreciate and respect and understand.

In the Speaker's gallery today is someone who has retired after 42 years working here. She has brought with her friends and family from as far away as Jamaica to visit her, and she was kind enough to come back so that we could say goodbye. I know that the members would join me in thanking and wishing her well: Gloria Richards.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do want to let you know that between 1 o'clock and 3 o'clock, I shook hands with her and we now have a deal. I'm going to be the ghostwriter and she's going to write a book about all the Speakers and the people she's known here. I get the preamble and the last chapter; the last chapter's about a page long, but Steve Peters has two chapters about what he's done.

Anyway, as you can see, a very kind welcome and thank you very much, Gloria, for all the work that you've done for the province of Ontario.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London on a point of order.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, I'm glad you gave me a few more minutes, because I know I took some time introducing.

Aside from my favourite Liberal, Joan Peters, who's here today, we have Karen McDade, also from St. Thomas. I didn't even recognize Brigitte Cosens—I mentioned Don Cosens and Mark Cosens—but we've got to have Aubrey Cosens stand up. Aubrey is 12 and carries a wreath every Remembrance Day for a family member who is a Victoria Cross winner. There's a bridge in Nipissing's riding named after your family member. Welcome, Aubrey. Thank you for coming and seeing what legislation is all about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I definitely appreciate the camaraderie that's being displayed, so I want to blame Steve Peters for Aubrey's ability to wear red Converse shoes all the time. I just wanted to let that be known. There's an inside story for that. I'm older than Steve and I wore red Connies way before he ever wore them.

I thank all members for their statements and their kind reception of Gloria.

1520

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

WORKERS DAY OF MOURNING ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE JOUR DE DEUIL POUR LES TRAVAILLEURS

Mr. Hatfield moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 180, An Act to proclaim a Workers Day of Mourning / Projet de loi 180, Loi proclamant un Jour de deuil pour les travailleurs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The bill proclaims April 28 in each year as a Workers Day of Mourning. In 1988, the Legislative Assembly unanimously passed a resolution recognizing April 28 as a day of mourning for workers, to remember those who had been killed, injured or suffered disease on the job. It also serves as a day to protect the living by strengthening our commitment to health and safety to all workplaces.

Raised awareness is necessary, however; not enough is being done within our MUSH sector to recognize this day. We need more institutions mandated to recognize this day by lowering their flags. This bill requires that all Canadian and Ontario flags outside the legislative building, government of Ontario buildings and other buildings such as city and town halls, schools, universities, colleges and hospitals be flown at half-mast on the day of mourning, April 28 of each year.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice of ballot items 27, 28, 29, 30 and 31 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Bradley moves that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice of ballot items 27, 28, 29, 30 and 31 be waived. Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It's a pleasure for me today to rise in this Legislature to announce the next important steps in the transformation of Ontario's correctional system.

Transforming our correctional system is a priority for our government because we recognize that the status quo cannot continue. We know that we must address the systemic issues around corrections, creating a system that truly improves staff and inmate safety, enhances rehabilitation and reintegration programs, and strengthens inmate mental health supports to build safer communities for all. Simply put, our transformation is about putting the correctional part back in correctional services.

We also know that our correctional services staff, including our correctional officers and probation and parole officers, are the backbone of our correctional system. I have had the honour and privilege as minister to tour correctional institutions in our province and have seen the incredible job that our corrections staff do on a daily basis to keep inmates, our institutions and our communities safe.

Our government also recognizes that hiring additional correctional officers must be the first step in this transformation. That work is already under way. In fact, we have already hired 710 new correctional officers since 2013, and we are just getting started.

Earlier this week, I was proud to visit the Ontario Correctional Services College in Hamilton and meet the newest group of 140 correctional officer recruits. Seeing these new recruits prepare for their future is always an inspiring sight. These men and women have chosen to dedicate their careers to keeping our communities safe. They will bring professionalism, commitment and passion to their work, and we need more just like them.

While I was there, Speaker, I was pleased to announce our new correctional officer recruitment and training strategy. Under this plan, we will be hiring 2,000 new correctional officers over the next three years. Each and every one of these new correctional officers represents a strong correctional system, more effective rehabilitative programming and enhanced mental health supports. And they will be a reflection of Ontario itself, because we know that the best path to reach out to an offender in our custody—and to be seen as a role model—is for front-

line employees to represent and understand Ontario's diverse population.

We will also address cultural shifts in the inmate population, including the unique needs of female and aboriginal communities.

All new correctional officer recruits go through a thorough assessment process and must successfully complete a rigorous eight-week training program before being deployed to one of our correctional facilities. Those eight weeks include vital mental health training and inmate management techniques. The education of all correctional officers continues with ongoing job training throughout their professional careers. This is how we ensure that Ontario has the best of the best serving our communities by meeting the complex needs of inmates on the front line.

I was also pleased to announce the next intake of 17 new probation and parole officers that will start on April 4, because we know the vital role our probation and parole officers play in helping turn people's lives around and providing them with hope, opportunity and a chance to be a part of building an even safer place to call home.

Hiring 2,000 new correctional officers, in addition to the 710 we have already hired since 2013, is central to the government's transformation of Ontario's correctional system—to upgrade correctional facilities, increase staff and inmate safety, improve rehabilitation and community reintegration programs, enhance mental health supports, and significantly reduce the potential for inmates to reoffend.

Speaker, I am proud of these efforts, and I ask that members of this House recognize the tremendous job being done by our correctional, probation and parole officers, and welcome those who are training to follow in their footsteps.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a privilege to respond, on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and our leader, Patrick Brown, to the minister's statement on the transformation of corrections. We're pleased that the government is starting to comprehend the severity of the crisis in corrections, after the opposition has repeatedly called for action.

Patrick Brown, our leader, and myself have given our full support to Ontario's correctional staff, touring numerous facilities and repeatedly calling for immediate action regarding the deplorable conditions of many of our province's jails and detention centres, as well as pressing the government to improve safety, not only for our correction officers but also for our probation, parole and bailiff officers. I would be remiss, Speaker, if I didn't mention the safety of inmates as well.

We have continually spoken out on behalf of all correctional staff, with an emphasis on addressing chronic understaffing, and offering support for all staff suffering from PTSD—post-traumatic stress disorder.

I applaud the minister for committing to bring in more correctional officers, but I have concerns about the extended time frames for these hires. We need additional

staff now, not in three years. A staggering number of lockdowns have occurred due to chronic understaffing of correctional services. Not only does this abuse the basic human rights of inmates, many of whom have yet to be sentenced, but it also jeopardizes the health and safety of officers dealing with agitated inmate populations while being short-staffed.

For too long, our correctional officers have been faced with the challenge of heading out the door in the morning without knowing if they will return at the end of the day. We also know the tremendous toll that takes. Our friends in corrections are among the most likely to experience significant challenges from post-traumatic stress disorder, and that applies to all staff.

1530

Our caucus was pleased when the government finally introduced its own bill on PTSD, but we were baffled when the government left probation and parole officers and bailiffs out of their PTSD bill.

I've seen the pride that each correctional officer has for their job, their sworn duty to protect not only their brothers and sisters but also inmates as well as the public. I've also seen the frustration on their faces as they discuss Ontario's broken corrections system.

An alarming number of stabbings have occurred at the province's jails and detention centres, and I'm hopeful that the government will be considering expanding its successful pilot program of using body scanners to detect weapons that go undetected by traditional scanners, such as ceramics.

Ontario's crisis in corrections is not simply about understaffing; it's also about taking safety matters seriously. It's also about fixing the fundamental lack of respect shown to correctional, probation and parole officers across the province. We know that this must change.

Safety concerns raised by front-line staff must be welcomed and encouraged by the government. Instead, we have seen a government that has tried unsuccessfully to muzzle correctional staff. We will not be silenced. This must change.

When I raised the question on behalf of concerned correctional officers about alarming safety issues at the province's crown jewel facility, the Toronto South Detention Centre, it didn't take long for all staff members to receive a warning about confidentiality.

The minister is saying some very good things about the transformation of corrections, and to his credit, this government has in fact taken some very positive steps. But until trust can be restored between correctional staff and the ministry, the crisis in corrections will continue. It will be a long journey for the government to regain the lost trust of its correctional staff, but on behalf of the entire PC caucus, we will be there every step of the way to ensure that commitments are honoured and that the crisis in corrections is fully and properly addressed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to be the NDP critic for community safety and correctional services and

to respond to the minister's statement on transforming corrections.

Speaker, I've travelled around the province and have visited 15 of our jails and about half a dozen of our probation and parole offices. I saw dire need, I saw deplorable living and working conditions and saw first-hand what government neglect looks like.

During the years of purposeful neglect and the short-sighted hiring freeze, staffing levels have fallen, workload has increased, and conditions have deteriorated. We need sufficient levels of staff or jails can't run efficiently, effectively or safely.

Lockdowns, lack of programming, and limited access to visits, showers and yard put unbelievable strain on everyone living and working in our facilities.

Hiring is clearly part of the story, but, Speaker, they can't just hire a set number and then stop, or we will eventually be right back here. A responsible employer would make sure staffing levels are appropriate as officers and managers leave the job or retire. All jails need to re-evaluate their base staffing needs—managers and officers—and ensure that the levels meet the workload demand and specific needs of each jail or facility.

Workload and caseload issues need attention. Probation and parole officers in Ontario have the highest caseloads in Canada. They're high-stress service providers who keep track of all of our former offenders and do their best to keep our communities safe, with insufficient resources. This is a government that piles and piles on the stress and casework but does nothing to ensure the system works well.

During Bill 163 submissions, it became clear to me that this ministry doesn't seem to know what the job actually entails. Perhaps as part of the system transformation, the government can figure that out.

Remember that almost everyone who goes into our provincial jails comes out and tries to reintegrate into our communities. We want that to be successful. We want them not to reoffend. We don't want them to come out worse than they went in, but they are. Things are so bad that judges are reducing sentences because of the harsh and punishing conditions.

Speaker, we read about deaths, violence and overdoses on a regular basis in our jails. Correctional officers and inmates are suffering the effects of a violent and unsafe environment. At Bill 163 hearings, we learned about the devastating effects of PTSD on our first responders, but don't forget the inmates, who live under constant threat of violence and trauma and then have to successfully reintegrate into our neighbourhoods.

This is a terrible situation. But the government can do something about it. For over a year, there has been a body scanner pilot project at Toronto South Detention Centre. Metal detectors don't pick up drugs, lighter flints or ceramic knives. Our jails are full of weapons and drugs, Speaker. I've seen a body scanner scan that showed a lighter and a three-inch ceramic blade carefully smuggled inside someone's person. Body scanners are

necessary. They would keep weapons and drugs out of our facilities.

The minister has my letter asking for timelines and formal commitment on body scanners and metal detectors in P&P offices; I'm looking forward to the reply. Officers need the appropriate tools to keep up with the threat. So, Minister, is safety going to be part of this transformation?

Officers also need current and effective training: suicide awareness, CPR, first aid, mental health, breathing apparatus, community escort, and the list goes on. Training may not be transformative or shiny and new, but it is necessary. Cut a training ribbon if you need to, but get the expired training up to date across the province.

Our jails are not silos. They are part of our society and social systems. When this government eviscerates our health care system and shuts down psychiatric beds in our communities, like another 25 beds in North Bay, those who struggle the most with mental health are the most vulnerable and they often find themselves on our streets and, more often than not, in our justice and correctional systems. Jails are not appropriate places for our mentally ill community members. They're unsafe and they deserve appropriate care in our communities so that they don't end up warehoused or segregated in our jails.

We do need to have a very real conversation about segregation. This government can't point at the inappropriate or problematic use of isolation without pointing at itself. When they have closed the beds and cut supports, they have to take responsibility for the consequences. Isolation exacerbates mental health issues, but many mentally ill inmates would be in very real physical danger if they were in the general population. So what's the solution? The answer isn't in our jails. What will this government do to fix the problem that they have worked so quietly to create? Cutting psychiatric services doesn't get rid of the problem; it just locks it away.

A careful look at our justice system and the process has to happen. As the minister talked about, inmates across our jails are on remand in massive numbers. A re-evaluation and close look at our bail system clearly has to happen, but those pieces fit with the others that I've discussed.

Actions have consequences, but so does inaction. As this government is realizing, this government can talk all day about transformation and rehabilitation, but it doesn't matter if they don't address the foundational issues. Nothing secure can be built if we don't make sure that we have a solid foundation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made in the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mrs.

Gretzky assumes ballot item number 31 and Ms. Campbell assumes ballot item number 43.

It's now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Rick Nicholls: "Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

I agree with this petition, sign it, and will give it to page Khushali.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Miss Monique Taylor: The doctors have been quite busy because I have more petitions of the same.

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

I couldn't agree with this more. I'm going to sign my name to it and give it to page Jack to bring to the table.

ELDER ABUSE

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas today, there are more seniors 65 and over than children under the age of 15, both in Ontario and across Canada;

1540

"Whereas there are currently more than two million seniors aged 65 and over—approximately 15% of the population and this number is expected to double in the next 25 years;

"Whereas Elder Abuse Ontario stated that between 40,000 and 200,000 seniors living in Ontario experienced or are experiencing elder abuse;

"Whereas research showed that abuse against seniors takes many forms and is often perpetrated by family members;

"Whereas financial and emotional abuse are the most frequently reported elder abuse cases;

"Whereas current Ontario legislation incorporates the Residents' Bill of Rights, mandates abuse prevention, investigation and reporting of seniors living in either long-term-care facilities or retirement homes;

"Whereas the majority of the seniors currently and in the future live in the community;

"Whereas Bill 148, if passed, will ensure seniors living in the community have the same protection and support as those seniors living in long-term-care facilities and retirement homes;

"Whereas Bill 148, if passed, will require regulated health professionals to report elder abuse or neglect to the public guardian and trustee office;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the members of the Ontario Legislative Assembly pass Bill 148, An Act to amend the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992 and the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, requiring health professionals to report any reasonable suspicion that a senior living in the community is being abused or neglected to the public guardian and trustee office."

I agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the table with page Vanessa.

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas demonstrative schools in Ontario provide incredible necessary support for children with special education needs; and

"Whereas the current review by the government of Ontario of demonstrative schools and other special education programs has placed a freeze on student intake and the hiring of teaching staff;

"Whereas children in need of specialized education and their parents require access to demonstrative schools and other essential support services;

"Whereas the freezing of student intake is unacceptable as it leaves the most vulnerable students behind;

"Whereas the situation could result in the closure of many specialized education programs, depriving children with special needs of their best opportunity to learn;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately reinstate funding streams for demonstrative schools and other specialized education services for the duration of the review and to commit to ensuring every student in need is allowed the chance to receive an education and achieve their potential."

I agree with this and am passing it off to page Sohan.

LUNG HEALTH

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

"Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage."

I support this petition. I give my petition to page Lauren.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Victor Fedeli: "Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician

services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

I agree with this, sign my name to it and give it to page Chandise.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Miss Monique Taylor: "Petition to Stop the Plan to Increase Senior Drug Costs.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario will require most seniors to pay significantly more for prescription drugs, starting on August 1st, 2016, under changes to the Ontario Drug Benefit;

"Whereas most seniors will be required to pay a higher annual deductible of \$170 and higher copayments each and every time they fill a prescription at their pharmacy;

"Whereas the average Ontario senior requires at least eight different types of drugs each year to stay healthy and maintain their independence; and

"Whereas many seniors on fixed incomes simply cannot afford to pay more for prescription drugs and should not be forced to skip medications that they can no longer afford and to put their health in jeopardy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Stop the government's plans to make most Ontario seniors pay more for necessary prescription drugs and instead work to expand prescription drug coverage for all Ontarians."

I couldn't agree with this more. I'm going to give it to page Cooper to bring to the table.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: "Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a growing number of Ontarians are concerned about the growth in low-wage, part-time, casual, temporary and insecure employment; and

"Whereas too many workers are not protected by the minimum standards outlined in existing employment and labour laws; and

"Whereas the Ontario government is currently engaging in a public consultation to review and improve employment and labour laws in the province;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement a decent work agenda by making sure that Ontario's labour and employment laws:

"—require all workers be entitled to a starting wage that reflects a uniform, provincial minimum, regardless of a worker's age, job or sector of employment;

"—promote full-time, permanent work with adequate hours for all those who choose it;

"—ensure part-time, temporary, casual and contract workers receive the same pay and benefits as their full-time, permanent counterparts;

"—provide at least seven (7) days of paid sick leave each year;

"—support job security for workers when companies or contracts change ownership;

"—prevent employers from downloading their responsibilities for minimum standards onto temp agencies, subcontractors or workers themselves;

"—extend minimum protections to all workers by eliminating exemptions to the laws;

"—protect workers who stand up for their rights;

"—offer proactive enforcement of laws, supported by adequate public staffing and meaningful penalties for employers who violate the law;

"—make it easier for workers to join unions; and

"—ensure all workers are paid at least \$15 an hour."

I agree with this petition and I give it to Jack to deliver.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government wasted \$2 billion, according to the Auditor General, on the flawed smart meter program; and

"Whereas the recent announcement to sell 60% of Hydro One and, in contravention of the law, use the proceeds to finance the building of infrastructure and not contribute the full amount to pay down the \$27-billion existing hydro debt; and

"Whereas with the removal of the Clean Energy Benefit, any increase in energy rates starting in May 2015 will see average household hydro bills increasing an additional \$205 per year; and

"Whereas home heating and electricity are a necessity for families in Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario's power consumers, including families, farmers and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity."

I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page MacFarlane to take to the table.

CAREGIVERS

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are over 2.6 million caregivers to a family member, a friend or a neighbour in Ontario;

1550

"Whereas these caregivers work hard to provide care to those that are most in need even though their efforts are often overlooked;

"Whereas one third of informal caregivers are distressed, which is twice as many as four years ago;

"Whereas without these caregivers, the health care system and patients would greatly suffer in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP Gélinas's bill to proclaim the first Tuesday of every April as Family Caregiver Day to increase recognition and awareness of family caregivers in Ontario."

I fully support the petition and give it to page Sohan.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"The recent decision by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services to put an end to funding for sheltered workshops and special employment services for people with special needs in Ontario. Community Living Chatham-Kent now supports 475 people and their families and employs more than 250 people. The Ministry of Community and Social Services provides 90% of the funding with the remainder coming from donations, fundraising activities, grants and foundations.

"We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who urge our leaders to act now and put a stop to this decision and reinstate the funding and programs to their previous state."

I approve of this petition. I will sign it and give it to page Terry.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Wayne Gates: "Petition to Stop the Plan to Increase Senior Drug Costs.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario will require most seniors to pay significantly more for prescription drugs, starting on August 1st, 2016, under changes to the Ontario Drug Benefit;

"Whereas most seniors will be required to pay a higher annual deductible of \$170 and higher copayments each and every time they fill a prescription at their pharmacy;

"Whereas the average Ontario senior requires at least eight different types of drugs each year to stay healthy and maintain their independence; and

"Whereas many seniors on fixed incomes simply cannot afford to pay more for prescription drugs and should not be forced to skip medications that they can no longer afford and to put their health in jeopardy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Stop the government's plans to make most Ontario seniors pay more for necessary prescription drugs and instead work to expand prescription drug coverage for all Ontarians."

I agree with the petition and I'll sign it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPLY ACT, 2016

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2016

Mr. Gravelle, on behalf of Ms. Matthews, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 166, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016 / Projet de loi 166, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2016.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Gravelle.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The member for Etobicoke Centre will be speaking on behalf of the government. I just really wanted to say that, obviously, this is an important act, in terms of getting our expenditures paid for the end of the year. I'm certainly hopeful that all members of the Legislature will be supportive of this so that this important action can be taken.

I will now pass it off, if I may, to the member for Etobicoke Centre.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm pleased to rise to discuss Bill 166, the Supply Act. As I was heckling the minister, I said, "How can we possibly support this? The people of Ontario don't trust you with their money." That will be the theme of what I speak about for the next 20 minutes. I'll be sharing the time with the member from Lanark.

Quite frankly, and quite seriously, this government has been mired in waste, mismanagement and scandals. The people of Ontario have been speaking loudly and clearly about the fact that Ontario has become too expensive for them to live in. A couple of days ago, on March 21, my office sent me an email. My staff sent me this and said, "Vic, we just got a call from a fellow who asked to remain anonymous. He said that he and his wife just moved back here from 20 years being out west. They have five university degrees between them. They were shocked at how much hydro has gone up, how little jobs still pay and how much rent costs, when compared to housing. Also, they couldn't find a doctor. So they're moving back out west."

Speaker, that's one email. It's just a reality that this government has made Ontario far too expensive. This last budget has hurt the population of Ontario, and people, quite frankly, just don't trust this government with their money any longer.

I'm going to read you a letter, Speaker. This lady did give me permission to read her letter in the Legislature. Her name is Wendy Milne. She lives in my riding. She said:

"Hello, Vic,

"Firstly, I want to thank you for doing anything you can do to help seniors with the new drug proposed changes, which include raising the deductible from \$100 to \$170, as well as the copayment on individual drugs."

Wendy goes on to say, "This is definitely going to create a hardship for myself and my husband, as we are seniors living on a low income. We both have chronic diseases that require numerous meds. We are over the max ceiling of \$32,300 by \$100. Sad state of affairs for seniors who have worked all their lives and paid income tax. We have had to sell our property, because we could no longer afford to maintain our home."

This is an unsolicited letter. Wendy is somebody who just sent this—

Mr. Granville Anderson: Sure it was.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, I will not put up with this nonsense from that side again. This is Wendy Milne, who wrote a letter. If you don't want to listen to Wendy Milne, then maybe our team will listen to Wendy Milne.

Speaker, they also heckled me when I read this letter from the Legion a few minutes ago. Now, if they want to heckle the Legions of Ontario, that's fine. Heckle away.

Here's what I read on the same topic in members' statements. I realize, Speaker, that doubling the cost of drugs for 92% of seniors in Ontario really hurts this government. They've jumped into something; they're looking for nickels and dimes and under the couch to try to pay for their waste, their scandal and their mismanagement, and that's how they respond to Wendy Milne in North Bay.

Here is how they responded to the Legion. We'll hear if they heckle again. This is the member's statement I read a few minutes ago.

Families across this province are angry at this government's decision to double the drug cost for 92% of all seniors. At a recent Royal Canadian Legion convention held in Dunchurch, North Bay's Preston Quirt and Jim Thompson brought forth a motion expressing their displeasure. It reads:

"Whereas the proposed Ontario budget will have a drastic effect on the health and lifestyle of our senior population and may force more seniors into poverty;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the members of the Royal Canadian Legion attending the Zone H2 convention, strongly urge the provincial government to reconsider the changes to the Ontario Drug Benefit Program in their proposed budget."

Speaker, I'm glad we didn't have the Legion heckled this particular time.

Debra Cooper Burger, chair of OANHSS, a seniors' organization—come on, heckle away—was clear yesterday when she told our finance committee that seniors will be forced to choose between buying food instead of medication. That's what we heard. Our seniors rely on their medications to stay healthy and out of the hospital. Our most vulnerable deserve better.

1600

I ended my member's statement by saying that, I call on the Premier to stop making seniors pay for her government's waste, mismanagement and scandal, and to repeal the seniors' drug tax.

We're hearing from a large group of people. Whether it's the single person, Wendy Milne, whether it's Debra Cooper Burger of the seniors' organization, or whether it's the members of the Canadian Legion, we're hearing loud and clear that they no longer have faith in this government. They cannot tolerate the fact that they're doubling the drug plan for—

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: That is so misleading.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: You can drink all the Kool-Aid you want in the back row over there. They're doubling the drug plan, and it's obvious that these people disrespect Wendy and Debra and the Legion members, who have voiced their opinion loudly and clearly.

There was a time in Ontario, Speaker, where families looked forward to their golden years. This government is robbing them of those future memories. That's what we have to hear from this government.

It's obvious that the people of Ontario are speaking and do not care for this government and their punitive methods of making up for their waste, their mismanagement and their scandals by taking this money from seniors and families and cancelling the Children's Activity Tax Credit. They're taking the money from kids' sports—soccer, YMCAs. That's where they're digging in the couch for pocket change, to try to make up for the billions that they waste every day, every month and every year. It's a billion dollars a month, just on interest, for the bloated debt that this government has created.

When this government took office, debt in Ontario—it took 137 years for our debt to hit \$139 billion. It took 137 years to get there. This government has doubled that debt in 10 years, and now it will rise to \$308 billion after 13 years. That's unconscionable, the debt—the burden—that they've put on families. They have a Supply Act asking us to approve their money. Are you kidding? Not a chance, when they have proved that they cannot manage the money that the taxpayers give them. It is absolutely unconscionable that they do that.

Let's talk about some of the things that they're doing in this budget and where they're getting this money that they want to spend. Of course, they've gone to the usual sources: the sin taxes, the alcohol and tobacco taxes. They've done that. It's kind of an interesting thing how, during the last budget, they decided to sell Hydro One. One of the most heinous things that they did was put Hydro One up for sale, but again, under the guise that it will be used for transit. We now know—and it has been

proven by all financial institutions, and in fact the media have finally started suggesting—the actual fact from the Financial Accountability Officer that the money is going to artificially balance their deficit for two years.

The accountability officer has warned us that when that charade is over two years from now, and we no longer have that money coming in, the deficit will go right back up, because we have a structural deficit in this province. That's why the people will not approve of this Supply Act: because they have a structural deficit. That means it's built in; it's baked in. Their spending is higher than the revenue that they're receiving.

They're going to mask it for a couple of years with the sale of Hydro One—we've seen that—but that will end. The Financial Accountability Officer has told us that that will end in two years. You're going to have two years of pats on the back, and then, shortly thereafter—boom—you're right back, because you have not resolved the structural deficit that this government has created.

They're doing the same thing now with the cap-and-trade tax. They are taking that money and they are putting it right into the general revenue. They will be using it—ostensibly using it—for all programs that are already approved and already budgeted for. This is simply going to replace money that's already been committed. We've seen that; we now know that. We saw it in the actual bill. Schedule 1 of the bill itemizes the items that the money can be used for, and there it is, plain as day: vehicles, subways, subway vehicles as well—a list of everything that's already in the budget. That's why they have not increased the annual expenditure on infrastructure. They're merely using that money to put it in infrastructure and the money that was already there will be coming out. That's how they're going to be balancing the budget, and that's why we will never approve a supply bill from this particular government.

If you look at some of the other things that they're going to be doing, I talked about taking away the Children's Activity Tax Credit. I mean, how low do you have to go? Let me add the next item: the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit. I remember when they brought that in with great fanfare and how important it was and the photo ops. Boom, now it's gone. They got their day in the sun out of it and now it's gone. The child activity tax credit: Imagine that that's where you have to go in the province of Ontario to dig away at those vital tax credits that were once in place.

Of course, as we've said many, many times, if you look at page 191 and page 192 of the budget, you'll see that they're going to be increasing vehicle licensing—your vehicle licence, your driver's licence itself—special event permits, hunting and fishing licences, camping in provincial parks. Again, they're chipping away at the edges here. They're literally looking through the couch for nickels and dimes to try to think, “How can we make up for our multibillion-dollar deficit and all the sins of the past?” They're going to be making families, children and seniors pay for their waste, their mismanagement and their scandals. That's exactly what this government is doing, and that's just reprehensible.

If you look very closely at the budget, you're going to see what one of the results of this is. The Ministry of Finance themselves, in last year's budget, projected that jobs will be created in Ontario: 93,000 jobs, they said, would be created in 2016. Because they've put all those punitive taxes on children, seniors, and families, because all of those tax credits are gone and all of those other fees are going up, this will take millions out of the economy. And because of that, their own Ministry of Finance now has readjusted their job forecast for this year, down from the 93,000 originally forecast to 78,000. Because costs are going to be going up, and people will not have the money to spend that they originally were going to have, businesses are going to suffer and they're going to have layoffs and jobs will not be created. They've reduced their projection by 15,000 jobs. That is a number that's in the budget. It's not something we dispute. We agree that their punitive action is causing these job losses.

In fact, they also took last year's number, where they predicted a 1.3% increase in employment, and downgraded their own prediction to 1.1%. All of the added costs in this budget are going to reduce disposable income, they're going to depress consumer spending and cost the people of Ontario jobs. That's in their own document. That's not something that we would argue. These are some of the reasons why we can never support this government's supply bill.

I think one of the most concerning items that we have is what they've done to the energy sector. We heard from the Auditor General just in December, where she told us that they could have put in the same amount of green energy that they have put in today if they hadn't changed the contracts to this overly generous contract. We could have had the same amount of green energy for \$9.2 billion less. Can you imagine what we could have done in the province of Ontario with this extra \$9.2 billion? If I said "million" earlier, I apologize; it's "billion." This is the one that we hear most from people, their energy bills, where they just can't seem to make it.

I held a session in North Bay for seniors last week when I was home on constituency week, and Bonnie Beam was one of the seniors who came into my office. She told the media how she can only turn the heat on in her bathroom because the cost of hydro is, in her words, "astronomical." That's the only room she can afford to heat. She also told the media that her heat is turned off in the bedrooms. When the temperature drops below minus 30 degrees, she "might turn the heat on a little in the kitchen."

1610

This is the Ontario that this government has created. It was not the Ontario they stepped into in 2003, when our debt-to-GDP was a respectable and admirable 27%. Today, it's an embarrassing 40%. What that means in plain language is that we grew our expenses faster than the economy grew. Our debt grew because we spend more money than we take in. Our debt grew faster than the economy grew. Our debt-to-GDP skyrocketed to almost 40% today. That's awful when you look at world

standards and look what they inherited when they took office. Our debt-to-GDP was 27% and today it's almost 40%. This is the mismanagement that I speak about.

We talk about waste. You think of the smart meter program: \$1 billion, they announced. Now it turns out, according to the Auditor General, it's \$2 billion and the things don't work. They get no data coming in to help them make the decisions.

They say, "Vic, what do you mean when you talk about waste, mismanagement and scandal?" I could look at just the energy sector alone and give you waste, mismanagement and scandal. Sadly, it's now pervasive. It's in every one of the ministries: SAMS, if you remember that scandal; the MaRS scandal; and, of course, the gas plant scandal, which some would call the mother of all scandals, but I'm not even sure that that is accurate.

Speaker, I tell you, we bring these things out into this Legislature and talk about them, and we have to put up with the mocking and the huffing and the puffing and the eye-rolling, but I'll tell you, I remember the day, standing here, when we asked the government, on the gas plant scandal—I'm talking about why the people don't trust this government with their money. I remember, in the gas plant scandal, right—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's a little noisy in the backroom there.

Continue.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I remember, in the gas plant scandal, when we asked the government how much it was going to cost to cancel the two gas plants, and the answer came back: \$40 million. I remember looking at the numbers and—we're talking about waste, mismanagement and scandal, and this kind of incorporates all of them in one—I remember saying, "Forty million dollars? That just doesn't seem right." Our whole caucus got together and thought, "This can't be practical." So we all dug into this, and a lot of our staff dug into this. We began to put a series of numbers together.

I remember getting the number; it was about \$890 million, at the time that our party assembled that, in terms of the cost. I remember standing here in the Legislature and saying to the Premier, "We don't believe the \$40 million. In fact, our number today, with what we now know, is \$890 million, but we think it's going to go higher." I remember saying, "It will cost more than \$1 billion," and I remember the laughter over there and the Inspector Clouseau lines and all the smug remarks that came from over there. I remember the Premier of the day saying, "Oh, now it's \$1 billion. Why not \$2 billion? Why not \$10 billion?", and laughter. Of course, the Auditor General comes out and says that it's \$1.1 billion.

This is exactly why we talk about waste, mismanagement and scandal. That's all we seem to get from this government, and that is exactly why. We can stand here. We all have thick skins; we're all elected. We can take the heckles and the barbs that come from the other side, but the people of Ontario have had enough. And the huffing—we can take that too. The people of Ontario are the ones who have had enough.

Their huffing doesn't cover over the fact that Bonnie Beam can only afford to heat her bathroom. She can't turn the heat on in her bedrooms. That's Bonnie—what she told the media last week. That's the Ontario that we live in today: Families have to choose between whether to heat or eat. That's unconscionable. And now, according to Debra Cooper Burger, families will have to make the decision of whether to eat or buy their medications. This is what it has come to in the province of Ontario. This is a terribly sad state of affairs, and that is why we will not support this government's supply bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to stand in this House. Today we're talking about the Supply Act. We're not really talking about the budget that was just presented. We're talking about allowing the government to finish the damage from last year's budget. Does anybody recall the title of last year's budget? It was Building Ontario Up, and in parentheses it should have said "and selling it off piece by piece," because last year is when they started the sale of Hydro One. I believe they've sold 15%. What makes that such a terrible mistake is that Hydro One actually brings revenue to the province. They're selling off their own revenue tools. I'm a farmer, and that's like selling the cows to pay for the feed, so you have no more cows left and you lose the farm. That's pretty simple math. Why they're doing that is to try to make it look like they're going to balance the books. That's the simple fact of the matter. They're selling assets like Hydro One to make it look like they're going to pay off the deficit.

The electricity file in this province, for lack of a better word, is an incredible mess.

I spend a lot of time in the House listening. I'm the whip, so I spend quite a bit of time in the House. Yesterday, I heard the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, and I can't remember what he was commenting on, but he was surprised because some of our comments—it seemed like we were living in a different province. Well, Speaker, I'm from northern Ontario, and a lot of times we feel like it's a different province.

I'll give you some examples. I'm not sure that my daughter is going to appreciate me talking about her, but my daughter Steph works in northern Ontario. She and her partner have a condo in Etobicoke and they rent it out. In a casual conversation with her partner, R.J.—we were talking a couple of days ago about the hydro bill for the condo, and he was pleasantly surprised because they had leased it out and the hydro bill went down from \$32 a month to \$26. He was pleasantly surprised. We took a look at my hydro bill—granted, a condo is smaller than my house; I have a 1,200-square foot bungalow. I heat with wood, and my hydro bill is \$250 a month. Why? It's because of the delivery charge. Yet the Minister of Energy goes on and on about how we have the lowest hydro rates and blah blah blah. Well, do you know what? In northern Ontario, in rural Ontario, people are being driven out of their homes by energy costs. That isn't the

case, I've learned—because my daughter in Etobicoke certainly is not being driven out of her condo by energy costs. There's a huge difference. Let's say her condo is half the size of my house, so let's double her bill: That's 50 bucks, and that's with heat. There's something really, really wrong, Speaker. That's why people are being driven out of rural Ontario. It doesn't look like this government understands that, because we keep hearing things like "Well, no, we've got low energy costs, and we've got"—no, we don't. When you take the overall bill—and don't pick this and don't pick that; take the bill, what people actually have to pay—it's astronomical for people in rural Ontario. That's the problem. That is the crux of the issue for energy costs. And that cascades over into businesses who want to create jobs in this province. It's the same thing.

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But the example of my daughter's condo and my house, when I heat with wood—and I make a good buck. I'm not complaining about my salary, but there are all kinds of people in my riding and throughout rural Ontario who live in an equivalent house to mine, who are happy to be able to make the payments on the house, and they cannot afford that.

We look at what's happening now with this budget. Take seniors' prescription drug costs. They can say, "Well, there are so many hundred thousands who are going to benefit," but the basic fact of the matter is that the majority are going to pay more, and a lot of those people can't afford it because they're right on the tipping point of how much that's going to cost. This government can say we're wrong, but that's the fact of the matter from our perspective.

It's the same as what they're telling us: "We've got the lowest hydro rates in all of"—and they named all the provinces this morning, and they named the states. Well, not for people in northern Ontario, I'm sorry. That, quite frankly, is not the truth.

I'm trying to word this—

Interjection: Let it rest, John, let it rest.

Mr. Grant Crack: Take your time.

Mr. John Vanthof: We're still dealing with the damage of the last budget. I'm going to back up for the last budget again, because this one I just can't let go. I should make better notes like Vic here, but I'm kind of an off-the-cuff guy.

We keep being told in the last budget, "We're selling off Hydro One to build transit infrastructure." Never has another government before built transit infrastructure. This is a whole new concept. Up until now, we've all been on dirt roads in Ontario, but that's beside the point.

But while we hear all this loud-and-proud about transit infrastructure—and we believe there should be more transit. I live here six months a year; I don't begrudge people in the GTA that they need better transit. I don't begrudge them a bit. But while we hear from the government, "You know what? We're going to build transit infrastructure and that's why we're selling Hydro One," you know what happens in my part of the world? You

close transit infrastructure. You close bus stations. You cancel bus routes. You couldn't cancel the train because you already did that.

So again, what we feel in rural Ontario—specifically in northern Ontario—is much different from what we hear. That's why people don't believe, because they've been through this before. We've lived it. We hear one thing, but what we see and what we feel is totally the opposite.

I'll give you another example, Speaker. In the latest budget, we understand there's going to be a tax as part of the carbon cap-and-trade—the word “scheme” comes to mind but I don't want to call it a scheme. I want to call it something more dignified than a scheme, because we believe that there is an issue with carbon and that it has to be fixed. But the first part of that was a tax on gasoline. Great. You guys want to put a tax on gasoline. If we had options in rural Ontario other than taking the car—but we don't. So, fine, the price of gas goes up to help with the carbon. Whether I agree or not, I can understand that part so far.

But then there should be an offset for the people who are paying that extra. So the offset—what we hear right at the same time is an announcement of a \$100-million program to help retrofit your home to use less energy, to create less carbon. Okay. The first thing that's announced is that it's going to be administered by Union Gas and Enbridge. You scratch your head and you say, “Okay, since a lot of people in rural Ontario aren't connected to Union or Enbridge, how are they going to access this program?” To our way of thinking, basically, they're not.

When we brought this to the government, it was, “No, no, you guys don't know what you're talking about. This program is accessible to everyone.” Our reaction was, “How?” If you're a customer of Enbridge or Union, you would likely get a little thing along with your statement: “Here's this program and here's how to apply.” So if you buy propane from, in my riding, Grant Propane, or if you burn wood or burn oil, how do you make that connection?

The President of the Treasury Board says, “No, John, you're wrong. It's accessible to everybody.” I said, “Well, how? Are you going to put an ad in the local paper? How are you going to make this program accessible?” Her response was, “Well, you know, maybe we'll have to work on that a bit.” “Okay. I'm willing to live with that.”

I get a call from someone in my riding who is a customer of Union Gas and who contacted Union Gas and wanted to participate in the program. The response from Union Gas is, “Well, currently, we don't really have people in your neck of the woods”—they didn't use those words—“in your area who can actually make this come to fruition.” So even the Union Gas customer can't access the program.

So I go again to the President of the Treasury Board and make her aware of this, and she said, “That's because we just announced this program and we don't really have the details yet on how it's going to work.” Well, you

have the details on how much it's going to cost for the extra gas; why can't you have the details on the other side? People are already—whenever this is going to come in, August 1—people know how much more it's going to cost them to get to work. In my part of the world, you can't take a train. You can't take a bus. Eight months of the year, you can't take a bicycle. So we know we're going to be paying more money to go anywhere.

But, on the flip side, well, *que sera, sera*; it's coming. The program is coming. That is what scares people. Specifically, and I'm speaking for rural Ontario right now, it frightens us, because we've seen other things that were coming down the pipe.

For this carbon thing to work, there has to be a cost. There's going to be a cost, but there has to be a benefit for people to buy in. If you're just going to shake people down for more money, without them seeing any benefit, it's not going to be successful. In the end, we can disagree totally on how to do things but I truly believe that all of us in this House want the province to be successful and want all the people in this province to actually feel like they're part of the province. Right now, Speaker, in my part of the world, people don't feel like they're part of the province. When they hear that our energy costs are low, when we hear that we're building all kinds of transit, and when we hear those things—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: And roads and bridges and highways—

Mr. John Vanthof: And roads and bridges, which we have to drive on—we have no choice. We have no choice but to drive on them.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: In northern Ontario.

Mr. John Vanthof: In northern Ontario, because cars are the only thing that we have.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Having a little debate, are we? I think you go through me—as you smile—through me. Thank you.

Continue.

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Mr. John Vanthof: The Minister of Transportation said that they spend money in northern Ontario on roads and bridges, and they do; we're not denying that. We appreciate it when money is spent in northern Ontario on roads and bridges. But everyone has to realize that that's the only transportation we have, so there's no option.

I'll go back to my daughter who now works in northern Ontario. Down here, she had the option of using public transportation. She laments about the price of gas because she has to drive to work. Again, we're going to put the price of gas up or the price of home heating up to help with the carbon issue. One of the ways it can help, if you put the price of something up, is people will naturally try to find alternatives to use less. That's one of the ways to do it. But if there are no alternatives and if the programs that are announced aren't fully developed, or, quite frankly, aren't developed enough to be believable—I got another quote from the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change yesterday. He said in one of his comments that every single building in Ontario

is going to be retrofitted as part of this. Our question is, how and when? Because, again, we're going to be paying the bill for the gas. We're already paying the bill for the electricity. But we hear "every single building." Well, a lot of my constituents won't be able to afford to pay the bills. The house will be long gone before this kicks in. But we hear the minister saying that, and people want to believe the minister; people want to believe. But people don't see the results, and that is the biggest issue. That truly scares me. It scares the people in the north.

When I see stuff like petitions going around to separate northern Ontario—and I'm a proud Ontarian. I'm an extremely proud Ontarian. But those petitions, when I see some of the people who sign those petitions, it's not that they want to separate; in my opinion, they don't see themselves reflected in this province, because what's being put forward by this government doesn't reflect them. That's why we didn't support the last budget and we don't support this one.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'm honoured to speak to Bill 166, the Supply Act for 2015-16.

Before I get into the content of what I wanted to say, I just want to share an anecdote that I shared quite some time ago here in the Legislature about one of the early days after the last election when I was just the newly elected member for Etobicoke Centre. There were a number of people who came to offer me advice. One of them was a constituent. She came up and she said, "No matter what you do when you get elected, never forget that you're there to improve the quality of life of the people of Ontario. Never forget that, that that's why you're there. That should always be your focus."

I think of that today, because to me, this is what the Supply Act is about. The Supply Act is really about ensuring that we can continue to make those investments that will allow us to continue to improve the quality of life of the people of Ontario and the people in my community of Etobicoke Centre.

For those watching at home who aren't as familiar, the Supply Act is one of the key acts in the Ontario Legislature. If passed, it would give the Ontario government the legal spending authority to finance its programs and honour its commitments. Passage of the Supply Act would constitute final approval by this assembly of government and legislative office program spending for the fiscal year that is coming up at the end of March, in fact on March 31.

It's important to note that the Supply Act does not authorize any new expenditures. I think some of the members opposite were talking about forward-looking expenditures. The Supply Act actually isn't about forward-looking expenditures; it's about the expenditures for this current fiscal year that's ending on March 31.

All expenditures incurred under the Supply Act would be in accordance with the 2015-16 estimates. The estimates set out a comprehensive account of the government's intended expenditures for the fiscal year and

include details of the spending plans that were presented in our 2015 budget.

To recap, last week the Legislature gave its concurrence to the estimates for fiscal 2015-16—that's the year that's ending on March 31—and in doing so, it approved the estimates of seven ministries and offices that were selected for review by the Standing Committee on Estimates. The estimates for ministries that were not called to the standing committee and all legislative offices received what's called "deemed concurrence."

Today, as we near the end of this fiscal year, we are discussing the Supply Act. It provides the necessary legal spending authority for vital payments made to institutions and individuals—for example, institutions such as hospitals, schools, municipalities; people who are vulnerable who need our help. To stress, this is not about approving new spending; it's about providing authority for the government to finance its programs and honour its commitments. It's about approving spending on important priorities like schools, hospitals and income support, items that benefit the lives of people across Ontario, benefits that improve people's quality of life.

When I introduced the concurrence in estimates to this House, I spoke about how Ontario is well on its way to balancing the budget in a fair and responsible way by 2017-18. Today, what I'd like to do is to talk about some of the achievements of this past fiscal year to help provide context for this discussion as it ties in with the Supply Act.

For context, Ontario has taken great strides since the 2009 global economic downturn, which had a devastating impact on people and governments worldwide. I want to reiterate that our government is committed to balancing the budget by 2017-18 in a fair and responsible way. Our plan to balance the budget is focused on managing growth and spending, delivering on the best possible value for every dollar and improving outcomes for people with every dollar that we spend.

When I ran for office in Etobicoke Centre, one of the things that I committed to my constituents was that if I was elected, I would bring my experience as a businessperson, as someone who has taught at a business school at York University, who has been a management consultant, to help our government achieve that goal, to make sure that we manage growth and spending, that we get value for the dollar and that we improve outcomes for people. That's exactly what our government is doing.

The 2014-15 deficit was \$10.3 billion, down \$2.2 billion from the 2014 budget projection of \$12.5 billion. This has marked the sixth year in a row that Ontario beat its deficit target. In the 2015 Ontario economic outlook and fiscal review, we projected lower deficits of \$7.5 billion in 2015-16, \$4.5 billion in 2016-17 and a return to balance in 2017-18. That is largely due to diligent management of growth and spending.

Ontario consistently has the lowest per capita program spending among all Canadian provinces. We have done this while continuing to invest in priority programs and services like health care and education.

The member for Nipissing spoke during his remarks about where he thought we were getting the savings; I think those were the words he used, more or less. Unfortunately, these are just not—what he said were simply not the facts. He doesn't have his facts straight in terms of how we're going about managing spending and balancing the budget.

We are not going to balance the budget by making across-the-board cuts, and we're not doing that. We're going to do it by doing government differently, by finding new and smarter ways of doing things to improve outcomes and deliver the best value for Ontarians. We're doing that through something called Program Review, Renewal and Transformation, or PRRT for short.

I'm proud to work alongside our President of the Treasury Board, Minister Deb Matthews, and the rest of the team at the Treasury Board—and, frankly, our entire caucus, who works on this every day—in terms of making sure that we spend our money wisely and get value for dollars. But specifically, I'm pleased to work with Minister Matthews on PRRT, where we are looking at how every dollar across government is spent and we're using evidence to improve better choices and to improve outcomes for people.

At a high level, I'd like to describe what we're doing. We are asking the following questions about each program and service: Is it relevant? Is it effective? Is it efficient? Is it sustainable? We're moving forward with opportunities that improve efficiency, reduce overlap across government programs and ensure government works better for Ontarians. We're being responsible.

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The member for Nipissing talked about how he believes we should work towards a balanced budget, how we should manage the taxpayer dollars. Frankly, Speaker, when the PCs were in power, they had record GDP growth. They still ran deficits; they still grew the debt. They cut services. They downloaded services to municipalities. They didn't reduce the debt; they kept growing it—even though the member for Nipissing spoke extensively about how we're growing the debt. Actually, I should say they did make one contribution to the debt, which was \$3.1 billion, when they sold the 407, and we all know how that turned out. These are the folks who are now telling us how we should spend our money. I think their track record begs some questioning.

We're doing this in a responsible way, Speaker. Let me give you an example of how we're doing it. We integrated six existing dental programs for children into one program called Healthy Smiles. What we did was change eligibility, making it easier for families of eligible children and youth to get access to timely dental care. As a result, 70,000 more kids from low-income families can get dental services, and 460,000 children are now eligible.

We want to make sure that government programs are working at their best. That's why we've established a new Centre of Excellence for Evidence-based Decision Making Support that will help build capacity to assess how programs are performing.

We've appropriately managed our Ontario public service labour costs, working with our partners in the broader public service to reach agreements that are fair and reasonable to government employees and the taxpayer, and consistent with our fiscal plan.

We've made it clear that there is no new funding for compensation increases, and that any modest wage increases in a contract must be offset by cost-saving measures elsewhere in collective agreements, to create a net-zero outcome.

This is a responsible way to approach this, Speaker. This is in contrast, of course, to the Progressive Conservatives, who actually campaigned on a plan to address labour costs by cutting 100,000 jobs. I think our approach is responsible and, again, consistent with our fiscal plan, and preserves the services that Ontarians value.

We have achieved a number of net-zero deals: AMAPCEO in August 2014; a three-year net-zero agreement with OPSEU's unified bargaining unit in October 2015; a three-year collective agreement for OPSEU's correctional bargaining unit in January 2016. There are many other examples as well.

So again, just to recap, we're balancing the budget by 2017-18. We're doing it in a responsible way. We're going line by line, program by program, to make sure that we're delivering the best possible outcomes for people and, ultimately, the best value for taxpayer dollars.

Now, while we're managing spending, we're also making investments in the programs and services that Ontarians rely on: health care, education, roads, bridges and expanding transit. We're here with our Minister of Transportation, the member for Vaughan, and I have to say that he's doing a tremendous amount of excellent work on this issue of building important infrastructure, not just in the greater Toronto area, but also in the north, in the east, in the west and across our entire province. We're committed to invest more than \$134 billion in public infrastructure over 10 years, spending on priorities such as roads, bridges and public transit, hospitals and schools. This is the largest investment in public infrastructure in Ontario's history. These are investments that are going to support over 100,000 jobs per year, on average.

Since the 2015 budget, we've announced support for more than 200 infrastructure projects in communities across the province, including recent investments in major transit systems, 40 hospitals and 170 schools. In my riding of Etobicoke Centre, we have a school, St. Clement Catholic School, which recently received a commitment of funding from the provincial government, something that I'm very proud of and something that I was proud to work towards, alongside the community. Etobicoke General Hospital, one of those hospitals, is going to benefit tremendously from that funding, and they're breaking ground very shortly. That's one of the investments that we're making. This is just an example of some of the important investments we're making to improve health care, to improve education, to improve transit and some of the other things.

We continue to invest in the Ontario jobs strategy. We continue to invest in health care, in community care, in hospitals and in palliative care. We continue to invest in education—continually invest in education—because education represents the foundation for our young people's future. All of these investments are about improving the lives of Ontarians today and tomorrow.

We also know that our most vulnerable citizens need a hand, and we're giving them a hand. I know that the President of Treasury Board is also the minister responsible for poverty reduction. Our renewed Poverty Reduction Strategy, called Realizing Our Potential, builds on the progress we've made in the past, sets new goals, calls on new partners and focuses on investing in what works.

We're making strategic investments across government: in health, in education and in housing programs. The renewed strategy focuses on four areas:

- continuing to break the cycle of poverty for children and youth;
- moving towards employment and income security;
- a long-term goal of ending homelessness in Ontario; and
- evaluating and supporting workable and sustainable programs.

We launched the \$50-million Local Poverty Reduction Fund, which supports innovative and sustainable community-driven initiatives that measurably improve the lives of those most affected by poverty. Through the first round of the fund, we're supporting 41 projects in 20 communities.

We indexed the Ontario Child Benefit to annual increases in the Ontario consumer price index, and we increased the minimum wage and indexed it to the consumer price index.

We have a bold goal of ending homelessness in Ontario. When people have a home, they are healthier, happier, more ready for employment and better able to participate in the communities.

We have increased funding for our Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative by \$42 million annually, with a total investment of \$587 million over two years. We continue to build new affordable housing and repair existing units so that Ontarians with housing needs can find a place to call home.

Speaker, I started my remarks by talking about the constituent who reminded me that I'm here to improve the quality of life of the people of my community in Etobicoke Centre and the quality of life of the people across our province. That's exactly what this government has been doing and making a best effort to do. I think that we are protecting and improving the services that matter. We are being fiscally responsible; we're making every dollar count; we're getting better value for taxpayers' dollars. That's the commitment that I made to my constituents of Etobicoke Centre; that's, I believe, the commitment that we all made to our constituents; and that's exactly what we're doing here.

I want to reiterate that the introduction of the Supply Act is part of the government's economic plan. Without the spending authority that the Supply Act would provide, the government would be unable to meet its obligations to the people of this province, unable to make those important investments, unable to continue along a fiscal plan that is responsible, manages taxpayers' dollars wisely and gets value for money, and unable to deliver on what my constituent asked, which is that we improve the lives of the people of Ontario in the way we committed to. I urge all members of the Legislature to support this important act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's a pleasure to hear that we're living in a utopia—in Etobicoke Centre, anyway—and that the world is perfect. It may be even better than perfect, according to the member from Etobicoke Centre.

I'm going to give my version of what I hear from my constituents regarding this government. First off, it is evident and it is beyond reproach that this government doesn't care about people. That's what I see. I see people coming in to my office who can't get assistance for their children who are intellectually disabled; I see elderly parents coming in who can't get assistance and help for their elderly children who are disadvantaged; I see people coming in who are on significant wait times for cataract and hip and knee surgeries. I could go on and on.

It's clear that this government is on auto pilot. The ministers have no interest in actually dealing with their responsibilities as long as they have a slogan to talk about or a sound bite. That's what they're interested in: a photo op and a slogan. That's what this government is all about: photo ops and sound bites.

Speaker, this Supply Act is about the money that is already spent for this year: final statutory authority for expenditures up until March 31. I want to speak about what I saw about expenditures. A week ago today, I spent three and a half hours walking through the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre. I had an interesting visit with the superintendent, Maureen Harvey; the assistant superintendent from St. Lawrence, Brian Patterson; and the president of the union local, Denis Collin. We toured the facility and had a wonderful, honest discussion about the state of our correctional facilities and the state of the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre.

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It's also interesting that, today, the Minister of Community Safety made a ministerial statement about transforming corrections in Ontario. Well, I'll tell you, it needs to be transformed. It needs significant transformation. The \$2.5 billion that was spent in corrections this fiscal year, according to Bill 166—let me tell you a little bit of what I saw \$2.5 billion bought us.

I saw a busted-up exercise yard. The asphalt was busted up at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre. The inmates are not allowed to get any exercise, because the busted-up asphalt can be used as a weapon. We couldn't fix an exercise yard for \$2.5 billion. They'd rather just

leave the inmates in their cells. In the same yard, the protective film on the windows was tattered, torn, in total distress, not functional—\$2.5 billion, and we couldn't even fix some windows. Does this government care? I don't think so. But there was much else that I saw there.

The minister spoke today about hiring 2,000 new guards for our correctional facilities. Well, we probably need 2,000 new guards because they won't spend a couple of dollars on technology to help the guards.

I was astonished, as I was speaking to the superintendent, about the level of drugs and contraband that come into the detention centre. They tell me that most of these drugs and contraband—tobacco—even things such as ceramic knives and various other unlawful products come in by people filling up Kinder eggs. You know those little Kinder eggs that you're supposed to get a little toy in? People open them up, fill them with drugs and either swallow them or insert them in a body cavity. Or they fill up condoms—again, the same thing. And our guards have no way of finding out what is being brought in.

I asked the guards, "Do you not do a cavity search?" I found out that we're not permitted to do that. Our guards are not permitted to do that unless there is consent. Now, if somebody is bringing in illegal drugs and contraband, it's unlikely that they're going to provide consent. The only mechanism at the guard's disposal is something they call a BOSS chair. They sit the inmate in the BOSS chair and do an X-ray. But the X-ray will only pick up metal; it won't pick up Kinder eggs. It won't pick up other things—it won't pick up ceramic blades—and all these inmates know this. I was surprised. I didn't know we had the BOSS chair, but we have no other search mechanism.

The superintendent and the president of the union local said this could be solved. They need body scanners, the same body scanners that CBSA has at our airports. If we had one of those in each of our detention centres, the level of drugs, ceramic knives, tobacco—whatever else—would be greatly reduced, if not eliminated. But I didn't see any expenditure, any investment in body scanners in this \$2.5 billion—zero. We couldn't fix the pavement, can't fix the windows and can't buy a few body scanners. So the problem persists and persists.

Let me put this in perspective, Speaker. This is not just a wee bit of a problem like somebody smoking a joint in their detention centres. These are members of gangs, people bringing in drugs—and the violence that occurs. In my three-and-a-half-hour visit there, I saw one inmate who had been beaten severely, just prior to me getting to that area of the detention centre. He was beaten severely, and he was being taken into protective custody for his own protection. I think the individual was powerfully pleased that there was someplace he could be relocated to.

That's what drugs and weapons do in our correctional facilities because we need to ask for consent to search somebody, and because we won't invest in a body scanner. We can go out and hire 2,000 more guards—and that's probably a blessing—but let's go out and buy a

couple of body scanners, and let's start putting a dent in the problem at our correctional facilities.

This idea of Kinder eggs coming into our jails full of drugs and our guards not being able to do anything to prevent it—keep this in mind: It was explained to me that most of these drugs are being brought in by people who are coming in on intermittent sentences. People who have been sentenced to 90 days or less, who are serving their sentences from Friday to Sunday or Friday to Monday, learn the system—they know how the system works—and the gangs within our facilities are demanding that they bring in contraband or they will be beaten if they don't. People are fearful for their lives in not complying with the ruthless behaviour by people in corrections.

The superintendent and the president told me that they've seen people—because the contraband is so profitable and so lucrative in our correctional facilities—actually go out and intentionally break their conditions of release so that they will be brought back to jail for the weekend, so that they can sell their drugs and contraband at such exorbitant rates. Imagine, our system has actually built in an incentive for people to breach the conditions of their sentence so that they can make more money by going to jail for the weekend. There's something wrong with this picture, Speaker.

When I said that this government doesn't care—they have allowed this to persist. They've allowed it to continue. They've done nothing. Body scanners are not new. This is not something that just got developed last week or last year. We've had them in our airports for quite a period of time. We've had a drug and violence problem in our correctional facilities for quite some time. Why have they chosen to do absolutely nothing? It's out of sight out of mind, and they don't care. They don't care if there are drugs being brought in. I think that's what we saw with our correctional facilities guards and the strike that they had. They recognized that all their pleading, all their requests for assistance from this government fell on deaf ears for years and years. They couldn't get them to act in any way.

1700

That's a couple of the things that I saw in three and a half hours. Maybe the member from Ottawa South would like to join me on a visit to the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre someday—or maybe the Minister of Transportation would—and go out and actually see what happens.

There's something else. I spoke with the Minister of Community Safety a little while ago about electronic monitoring for people who are violent offenders. We have no mechanism to track where violent offenders are or what they are doing. We don't know if they're breaching their conditions or not. We just don't have the program.

I was doing a little research. The city of Calgary, the city of Edmonton, the province of PEI and our CBSA authorities all have electronic monitoring. They have ankle bracelets that they can put on violent offenders. They know where that person is; they know if that person

is breaching any conditions. Lo and behold, to my surprise, when I was speaking with the firm that provides protective electronic monitoring ankle bracelets to all these places—that we don't have here in Ontario—the company actually monitors all those offenders from Sudbury, Ontario. That's where their service is provided from.

These ankle bracelets have a built-in cellphone. They have a built-in siren. They have a built-in vibration device. If the offender approaches a person or a place where they're not allowed to be by court order, the vibration goes off and a phone call is made. If it persists, the siren is initiated and the police are called.

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I know the Minister of Transportation thinks this is all funny and there's nothing important to be heard here, because, again, they don't care. It would be nice if one day we had ministers of government who cared.

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Hillier: The Minister of Transportation continues to heckle. The member for Ottawa South continues not to care.

But, listen, why do they permit and allow people to live in fear because they won't buy those ankle bracelets? They won't invest. This government is good at spending money; they are absolutely shameful and terrible at investing in anything. They don't know the difference between spending and investing. They are not the same. These guys are good at spending; they're reckless at spending. They have no idea what an investment is because they don't care about any return. The only return that they're interested in is their own return to this Legislature. They're not interested in any return for the public in Ontario. That's what the problem is. They've got their interests confused with the public interest.

So why is it? For \$20 a day, we could have this system in place in Ontario. It's been available for years. But, just like the body scanners, they haven't bothered. Nobody on the government benches could be bothered to get up off the couch and actually investigate anything. I'll tell you when this government investigates something: when the media has a story about their failings on the front page. When there's a story of their failings on the front page in our papers, then this government and their ministers take notice. But if it doesn't happen on the front page, they just don't care. They just don't care, Speaker.

So let's put this on the front page. Let's put this on the front page about how they don't care about the guards, they don't care about the victims and the people who live in fear, they don't care about anything.

I see the member from Barrie is heckling and laughing. That doesn't surprise—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay, here's the deal. If the member from Barrie wants to talk or talk back, she might want to get in her seat.

The Minister of Transportation is holding court and having quite a humorous laugh over there, with the assistance of the member from Scarborough—Agincourt.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I would also like the barbs directly at the Speaker to stop and slow down. If you keep on the pattern you're going, the member from Barrie, you're not going to like the result.

So continue.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'll wrap up, Speaker, seeing that most of my time was wasted with these members heckling and laughing.

But it shows what the problem is. They're not interested in any discussion or debate. All they're interested in is sitting in their chairs and laughing and thinking about their own return to the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to be able to have some time to speak on the supply motion and bill that's before us today and to talk about my experience with this government and the challenges that I have heard are being faced by families in my riding and across the province, who contact me when they're in need. Typically, Speaker, that falls within the child and youth services mandate.

Interjections.

Miss Monique Taylor: Speaker, should I sit down and wait just for a minute? I'm not sure. I'm talking to myself in this House. It's kind of an odd feeling, Speaker, to be talking and to be completely ignored. Everybody is talking, in every direction, and that's pretty typical of what happens in this government. But it is my five minutes to have my say, and I'm going to hopefully get that out, without the distractions.

Speaker, some of the things that I wanted to talk about were our children and youth services ministry, the challenges that are being faced by families, and children with mental health issues—6,000 kids on a wait-list for mental health services in this province. If we don't do anything about it, it's estimated that that will double and be 12,000 kids on a wait-list next year.

Money needs to be put into our kids' mental health. We need to observe and recognize the fact that if we don't put funding and money into our children when they so desperately need it, then they're going to struggle. They're going to struggle as adults, as being participants in society, in community, if we can't help them fix the small issues. It may be small; it may be larger. But if we can't give them the tools to be able to help themselves later in life, then we're failing.

We are doing that, Speaker. We know we have 16,000 kids on a wait-list for autism services, and 6,000 kids on a wait-list for mental health. If we should be taking care of anything in this province, we need to start taking care of our children and helping them to have healthy lives, and making sure that they can get through the school system, that they can learn to read and that they can get a job when they come out of that. If they don't get these services that they need, some may not even be able to have a full conversation. It's something that could have been fixed when they were a child.

1710

Talking about kids with special needs in schools, we see this government shutting down special-needs schools, the Trillium schools, in this province. They're doing a consultation. They're capping enrolment. They're not allowing any more kids to be able to get into these specialized programs to help kids with severe learning disabilities.

I spoke this morning, and I asked a question regarding a young boy who lives in my riding. He was struggling all through school. He finally had the ability to get into the Trillium school. His mother told me the process was a year-long process to be able to get into the school—the binders, and the criteria, and the paperwork that had to be sent in, just so this kid could learn how to read, right? He finally gets into the program. Things are going well. The kid is flourishing. He is flourishing, Speaker. He wrote a 400-word essay all on his own and on his own accord, not being suggested to, or not being pushed by family, or the teachers. He heard about the model Parliament program and thought, "I want to do that." If that child had not gone to those specialized schools, he would never have had the courage, the confidence or the ability to write that essay. We know that not many kids get to make it to the model Parliament. I'm so proud of Seamus and the accomplishments that he has made to be able to get and to be able to continue his education.

That's putting funds into our children. Yet this government is now blocking those schools, saying that no more kids are going to be able to receive these benefits of this specialized education. It's going to put more kids at risk.

The minister continues to say that all kids deserve equal access to education. Well, that's absolutely true, but all kids also deserve equitable education also. If someone needs extra special attention when it comes to their reading, and a specialized environment, then that child should have that ability to do so.

Here in the province of Ontario, we're failing. It's a big F when it comes to our kids with special needs in our education system.

We don't have nearly enough EAs to be able to assist. It's pretty much a babysitting job of kids who have special needs in the school. They're dealing with toileting and keeping the kid quiet so that the rest of the classes can get on.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: What an insult.

Miss Monique Taylor: It's not an insult. It's a reality that is brought to my attention from parents. The insult is that parents have to face this in their school system. That's the insult.

Our kids should be getting education, not just being pushed off into a corner and helped with their toileting or whatever else that they need. They need specialized education. They need treatment. They need to be given the skills and the opportunities to be able to flourish. They are being left out. The government is failing.

The other things that I would like to talk about are the children's aid societies, the budgets, the crisis that they

are finding themselves in once again. They were cut back 2% a couple of years back. A couple were given 2%, but that 2% still didn't bring them up to where they were able to balance their budgets, so they are still struggling. We have children's aid societies who are fundraising across this province, doing galas and doing all kinds of things to be able to keep their doors open and to provide the services in our child welfare sector.

On top of that, now, they've been given a CPIN program. They're being brought slowly into the process, and they are being given \$220,000 to be able to implement this program. Yet children's aid societies are reporting \$1.4-million to \$4-million costs of implementing the program. So, once again, that's a pretty big stretch. But this government is used to stretch goals, Speaker.

It's not me that's stretching the limits. They are the numbers that I'm given on the cost of implementation.

If we think that the cost of implementation isn't really a problem of technology in this province, let's talk about SAMS. We can talk about SAMS all day long because we know that municipalities are still bearing the brunt of the SAMS program, still not able to get all of their employees up to speed. Employees are finding themselves not able to deal with a program that this government refused to talk to people about. There was no consultation. They just rammed it through, bought a program off the shelf and said, "Here you go. This is what you're going to use." Nothing about that program suited the needs for our OW and ODSP situation, but this government decided that SAMS was going to be the program—and now CPIN is of the same nature.

Yes, they're doing things slower now because implementing it is a process, but it costs money; it costs money to do that. You can't just expect them to be able to fall into that program without running into trouble. When you already don't have any extra money, when you're already fundraising to make up the limits and you're already cutting front-line services to make up the difference again—you can't possibly expect to put more load on them and for them to not feel that brunt.

Our health care system: I've never seen the state of health care as I'm seeing it today. From residents who come to my office, from every single person that I talk to who has to go to the hospital, it's a fear. Nobody even wants to step foot into the hospital these days when we have a shortage of nurses—what we used to have as RNs are now not RNs; who is qualified to do what—and a mix of practitioners that simply can't keep up. I guess that would have to be the word.

We see patients who are falling behind. They're being left with bells ringing and soiled beds. They're falling out of bed and slipping on their own stuff because nobody is coming to their attention. We have adults who can't feed themselves. They're sitting there with plates in front of them for over an hour, two hours. The nurses can't possibly keep up with the cuts, and yet this is the reality.

What's happening? Where are the dollars going in our health care system? We know the huge amount of money in our health care system. How are we falling so far

behind? How is our system getting worse instead of better? Where does that happen when they claim that they've increased the budget? Well, they increased the budget, I believe, by 1%, and it's been frozen for four years in the hospitals. Even just to keep up with inflation it's 1.8%, but they gave them 1%. Now, they'll be able to say what a great job they did by increasing and not freezing the hospital budgets when, in fact, they are certainly frozen.

There are talks in Hamilton of bringing us into the future and the possibility of closing a large hospital that has specialized services for not just Hamilton—I know I'm very blessed to live in a city that has multiple health care facilities, but people from all over come into those specialized facilities, and they're already shutting down wards.

I'm going to have to stop soon, but it's a major crisis. They've closed down the mental health facility in your riding, Speaker, and are pushing patients up to my riding in the far west end, which is really far for people to have to travel when they have mental health issues. It's not something that is just a bus ride away; this is a serious jaunt up to get those services.

I know I will be voting against this. I appreciate having the ability and the time to have my say.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: I just want to stand and say to the member from—

Ms. Soo Wong: Hamilton?

Mr. John Fraser: No, not from Hamilton; from Lennox, Frontenac—sorry—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Lanark—Frontenac—

Mr. John Fraser: —Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington that I believe what he says, that he really cares about those things that he's talking about, but I think it's quite uncalled for for him to say to the people on this side that the people on this side don't care. What I do want to say is, I do have a basic understanding of what goes on in corrections, and it is something that concerns me. We may have some different ideas about how we can implement that.

1720

I do want to say very clearly that government is about choices. You have to try and invest that money in a broad range of services and things that people depend on. So you've got to pick some things. We heard some things this morning about what different parties did when they were in power about allocating that money. I simply want to say to the member on the other side that while I believe his sincerity, I don't think over there that you can choose everything. I think you need to pick a lane because you're saying everything to everybody about what you think they want to hear, and I think it's important to point that out.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you for allowing me to speak today. I'm happy to rise and talk about the 2015

budget and the impact it had on my riding of Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie.

When I took over last year—I see a lot of success in my riding. In some places, this budget certainly failed. Let's start in Fort Erie, and I'm glad the minister is here.

I've been working on a topic for years. I am absolutely not giving up. This government needs to support the Fort Erie racetrack. Last year's budget did include funding for the Fort Erie racetrack, and I'm happy to say we've been able to save the track, but we need to go further. Fort Erie remains the only town in the province that has to kick in extra money. That's money that's coming from the residents through their taxes to support the track.

In 2015, it was \$500 million. I don't think that's right. Taking the slots out of Fort Erie was an absolute mistake. It should never have happened. We've managed to save the racetrack, but now we need to fix it and make it great again. With last year's budget, horse people from across the province were clear that we need a long-term strategy. We can do two things right now. We can save the crown jewel of the town, increase race dates and return the slots. Last year's budget failed the people of Fort Erie by not returning the slots that should never have been taken away from Fort Erie. Let's reverse that policy of this Liberal government today and return the slots to Fort Erie.

What does that give us? If you do that today, like we should have done in 2015, we can save 1,000 jobs and hire another couple of hundred people on the slots, just like they had before. That makes a lot of sense to me.

We have seen some good development in Fort Erie. I'm talking about the Canadian Motor Speedway project. Over the last year, we're finally seeing the roadblocks removed that have kept that project from going forward for eight years. The Canadian Motor Speedway has partnered with a number of universities, including Niagara College and Brock University in my area, to bring together some of the brightest minds in the province. They signed a partnership contract with Brock yesterday to work together on innovation and research projects, which are all good.

This is a project that's going to give back to Fort Erie and to the province of Ontario. It's a project that can create jobs and revitalize the town. I'm happy to say that, over the last year, we've seen incredible progress, and I'm going to keep working with representatives at all levels of government to make sure this project gets done.

Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on one aspect of government spending from last year that affects my entire riding and the entire region of Niagara. That's the new Niagara Falls hospital. When I was running in the by-election that first brought me to this House—and I'm very proud to be here—over two years ago, the Premier came to Niagara Falls and unveiled a banner at the site of the new Niagara Falls hospital which said, "Funding grant approved." If we go there today, the banner looks almost like it's going to fall off. We know we're in stage 1A, but some people are saying that this hospital is years away.

People in Niagara can't wait years. They have a right to decent medical care in a timely fashion. We need to

see movement on this hospital and we need to see it soon. We have a chance here to increase our medical services in Niagara Falls and put local people back to work. It's a win-win. Despite last year's commitment to health care, we still don't have a shovel in the ground here today. Let's change that.

There's an important issue for seniors in my riding. Everywhere I go in Niagara—people on both sides of the House can say whether I'm right on this—seniors tell me they can't afford their hydro bills, they can't afford their food bills, they can't afford their gas bills. It's heart-breaking. You heard some of those stories this afternoon. On these issues, I believe we made it even worse in the 2015 budget.

As these seniors get older, they need to have vital health care services. The longer we wait on projects like the new Niagara Falls hospital, the more we'll put seniors at risk. They spent their entire lives—their entire lives—making our communities great. I've seen this first-hand in Niagara. They absolutely deserve our respect. Let's make it easier for them to stay in their homes and live their senior years in dignity.

There are many positives that came out of Niagara last year. I'm happy to say that in the last year we continued to see growth in Niagara-on-the-Lake. The wine region down there is an economic force, and the entire province should be proud of the work they're doing. There are ways we can support the industry; namely, let's get them more space on the shelves of the LCBO.

Hon. Jeff Leal: We just did that.

Mr. Wayne Gates: No, you didn't.

The wine industry is a great example of a booming local market. We need to do everything we can to support it. It creates jobs, and it puts money right back into the local economy. Here's something that maybe the minister should listen to: When you buy a local VQA wine, over \$11 goes back into the local economy; when you buy a foreign wine, just over \$1.04 goes back into the local economy. That's why we need to support them and give them more shelf space—not temporary shelf space, but permanent shelf space that goes longer than three years, sir. I'm proud of the wineries in my riding and what they have been able to do. They can count on my continued support. I hope this government will do the same.

But it's not just the wineries in Niagara-on-the-Lake. We have so many young, talented, smart people coming into the riding and taking advantage of the craft beer and craft cider markets. I will say without a doubt that we have the best craft beer scene in the province, maybe in the country. Go to Oast, Silversmith, Brimstone, Exchange, the Niagara Brewing Company or Niagara College, and you'll see for yourself that we're second to none.

This is a market that is growing rapidly. This government missed a chance in the last budget to offer all the support it needs to fully flourish and create jobs. I hope they will take a serious look this year at what the craft brewing and the craft cider markets need and will give them the tools they need to succeed.

Some of these successes have come with some major failures in last year's budget. Last year's budget saw a continuous cut to education here in the province. I've seen the effects of these cuts first-hand. I worked with the community in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and we did everything we could to save the heart of the old town, Parliament Oak. These sorts of cuts are the reason that Parliament Oak and schools like it around the province have been closed down.

Let me say clearly—hopefully they can hear me over there—that this closure was an absolute mistake. It was the wrong thing to do, and it was a poor decision. It bothers me to think about all the other schools in this province that had to face what the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake faced. These education cuts only hurt our children and our grandkids. They're the most important parts of our lives, and we should stop closing schools.

Here, I had a meeting today about Ontario books and Canadian books that I didn't even know about. In the budget this year, you're looking at cutting 15% out of the Ontario Media Development Corporation, for example. We used to have a great book publishing industry here in Ontario. In my riding, we had a company called Coutts, that was actually Ingram, out of the States, which shipped textbooks across the continent but also to local universities. I knew the workplace well. They were members of my local union, Unifor CAW Local 199. They were incredible, hard-working men and women, and there was no support for them from the province or from the federal government.

Coutts closed down that workplace in Niagara Falls and moved it, putting all these great people—100 of them—out of work. It's a shame, and it should never have happened. I've seen it first-hand, and this needs to be stopped before it happens again. These cuts will only create more of that.

1730

I want to say on the books, really quickly: Does it not make sense to anybody—I'm not so sure how much time I have here—to be supporting our local book industry by having local books that are done right here in Ontario and right here in Canada in our schools? That makes absolute sense to me. Why are you cutting 15% out of that? It makes no sense.

The last thing I'll talk about in my last minute is that we've lost 317,000 manufacturing jobs since 2000. These are usually good-paying jobs with benefits. We have to protect them. We need to work harder; we need to protect these jobs and expand this. These are real jobs.

In my riding, in my area, General Motors is there. They still employ 2,500 employees. They also have 6,000 retirees still in Niagara. They're an economic force. We should support that industry. We don't want to lose any more. We're already being threatened with the potential closure of Oshawa, as we all know. Manufacturing should be a vital part of where we go.

I've got 11 seconds left; I can't go without talking about Hydro One. Listen, we don't want to sell 1% of Hydro One. The Conservatives want to sell 49% of

Hydro One; you want to sell 60% of Hydro One. Don't sell one bit of Hydro One. It's a mistake—the biggest mistake this province has ever made.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I consider the member from Niagara Falls a very good friend of mine, but I think we just want to broaden the discussion a bit this afternoon.

This government has had unwavering support for the VQA wine industry in the province of Ontario. In fact, we consulted with them widely. They are going to get the opportunity to have increased shelf space in the province of Ontario. That's a very important development in an industry that is growing by leaps and bounds.

Collectively, we've also made some decisions. Craft beer and fruit wines will now be able to be sold in farmers' markets right across the province of Ontario. And I want to be very fair this afternoon. About 10 years ago, Bob Runciman—now Senator Bob Runciman, of course—had a private member's bill on this. I want to recognize his contribution on this particular debate.

Starting in the spring of this year, in all of the farmers' markets across Ontario, fruit wines and ciders will be available along with VQA wines. That's an excellent distribution channel for a product that now has an international reputation. When I was in China, they wanted to buy more Ontario VQA wines.

I just want to touch on horse racing for a moment. I have been to Fort Erie Race Track and it is the site, of course, of the second stop of the Canadian Triple Crown, when they host the Prince of Wales Stakes there. We've extended in our budget another two years for our horse race transition program, looking at ways that we can bring about a full integration of that plan to sustain many of these tracks right across the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, I might as well speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing—oh, sorry, you have no time left. You can sit down.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I tried.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Nice try.

Further debate? Last call for further debate.

Pursuant to standing order 64, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Gravelle has moved second reading of Bill 166, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

I believe the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell—oh, not yet. Here we have a little deferral, I imagine. This vote will be deferred until tomorrow morning after question period.

Second reading vote deferred.

WASTE-FREE ONTARIO ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO SANS DÉCHETS

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 10, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 151, An Act to enact the Resource Recovery and Circular Economy Act, 2016 and the Waste Diversion Transition Act, 2016 and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 151, Loi édictant la Loi de 2016 sur la récupération des ressources et l'économie circulaire et la Loi transitoire de 2016 sur le réacheminement des déchets et abrogeant la Loi de 2002 sur le réacheminement des déchets.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: As always, it's a great pleasure to rise and speak to this House.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I find myself rising to speak to a government bill that fits nicely into the pattern that most of their bills have created. We get these really excellent goals and bill titles that make for great sound bites, but what we don't get are the details. Time and time again, this government puts forward bills that lack the details that would ensure the goals of the bills are actually met.

Take this bill, for example. The Waste-Free Ontario Act sounds like an excellent bill. Who wouldn't want to live in a province where we don't produce waste? Unfortunately, while this bill has a title that makes it sound excellent, and while it recognizes the need for individual producer responsibility in Ontario, it falls short when we get to the meat of it.

First of all, there are no timelines in this bill for moving to a system of individual producer responsibility, which is important. If this bill becomes law, the day it passes absolutely nothing changes. Think about that: Absolutely nothing changes. Industry-funded organizations will still run our waste diversion programs, and there will be no real plan in place for them to move to a system of individual producer responsibility. That is a problem.

The industry-funded organizations that currently control waste diversion programs in Ontario simply are not doing a good enough job at diverting waste. As my colleague from Toronto–Danforth told us, these monopolies lack incentives to find creative ways to reduce packaging and divert waste from landfills. What does that mean? It means that, according to the government's own draft strategy, we're going to require 16 more landfills in Ontario before 2050. It means that many of the members of this House—except, I guess, the many members from that side of the bench in Toronto—are going to have to go into their communities and tell their constituents to plug their noses. I'm no expert, but I think it's pretty safe to say that telling members of your community that they're going to have to put up with a landfill for the rest of their lives is not going to make you very popular. So aside from the really negative environmental

consequences, I want the members opposite to also consider what the reaction of the people of this province will be.

Mr. Speaker—I see we've got a new Speaker. You're smiling. You're friendly. It's nice. Very good.

I want to make this very clear: I and all of my colleagues in the Ontario NDP caucus support the goal of introducing individual producer responsibility to Ontario. This is an idea that has been bounced around for a long time, and it's long past the time that we should have moved to this system. Only by introducing a system of individual producer responsibility to the province of Ontario can we ensure that more of our waste is being diverted from landfills. By introducing this system, we allow all waste producers in all sectors of our economy to develop their own methods for reducing waste. It creates competition to develop better and better waste diversion methods, and I'm sure the members of the other party on this side of the House will appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker, it is critically important that we do more as a society to produce less waste and have less impact on our environment. We need to divert more waste from landfills so that it doesn't just sit there and hurt our environment. New Democrats understand that if we're going to ensure that the planet we inherited from our parents and our grandparents is the same one that we leave to our children and our grandchildren, then now is the time to act.

1740

Take my riding in Niagara Falls, for example. We have a series of communities that rely on good weather to grow our grapes and barley for our VQA wineries and our craft breweries. We are a series of communities that rely on tourists coming to visit, whether that means coming to Fort Erie for the racetrack—for the minister—Niagara Falls for the falls or Niagara-on-the-Lake for peach festivals. They all rely on their natural environment to some degree.

In other words, we are a series of communities that will immediately and harshly feel the impact of climate change if it continues at this pace. We are also a series of communities that understands the need to take action on climate change.

According to a 2012 report released by the Environmental Sustainability Research Centre at Brock University entitled *Adapting to Climate Change: Challenges for Niagara*, our region can expect to see a 20% decrease in summer rainfall by 2050, a three- to four-degree temperature increase, and growth in the conditions that give rise to thunderstorms with a likely increase in heavy rain, lightning strikes, high winds and hailstorms, which would have a serious impact on agriculture in Niagara.

The report goes on to say that farmers in the Niagara region can also expect more negative impacts. They should expect a shorter growing season for Niagara's signature ice wine; they should expect an increase in invasive weed species and agricultural pests; and they should expect an increase in crop damage from unpredictable freezing rain and freeze-thaw cycles. Not

only does this eye test tell us that the Niagara region is going to feel the impact of climate change, but the scientists agree. Clearly, something needs to be done.

This is a good story that I'm going to talk about because I think this is what should happen in the bill. This is what we should be doing in this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to say that some of the people in my riding are already taking action. Walker Industries, for example—I'd like everybody to listen to this—is a company with hundreds of hard-working employees in my riding that does work on aggregates, construction, environmental project management, waste management, renewable energy projects and more.

The company has taken it upon themselves to introduce a sustainability framework to their business that guides their entire decision-making process. Well, think about this. The process helps ensure that they're able to integrate the need for environmental sustainability into their priorities, their metrics and their reporting capabilities.

And that's not all they've done at Walker. The company is the industry leader in beneficial reuse of biosolids, with multiple award-winning facilities right here in Ontario. They're also a company that operates landfills here in Ontario, and I'm happy to say that all of their landfills use some of the most advanced technology out there to help ensure that as little methane is released in the atmosphere as possible.

Even more than that, on an annual basis Walker is able—listen to this, Mr. Speaker, because this really caught my attention—to divert more than 300,000 tonnes of organic waste out of their landfills, making them, if not the largest, one of such organizations in the province.

Now, isn't that good news? Don't you think that's something that we should be doing in this bill, going to Walker and saying, "How do you do it?" and making sure other companies do the same thing? I think that's the way the bill should go.

Clearly, there are already companies out there taking a strong stance in support of the environment, and this piece of legislation would hopefully encourage more of them to join all of us in a fight to protect and preserve our province.

Mr. Speaker, the increase in greenhouse gas emissions that has occurred under the current system of industry-funded organizations managing waste diversion is appalling. No less a person than the minister himself told us that, "In Ontario, absolute greenhouse gas emissions from waste increased by 25% between 1990 and 2012."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank the member from Welland.

Questions and comments?

Ms. Daïene Vernile: I'm very happy this afternoon to add my voice to the conversation that we're having about Bill 151, the Waste-Free Ontario Act.

I'm happy to speak on behalf of the residents of Kitchener Centre, my riding. In Kitchener Centre, we are no strangers to caring about the environment and recycling. In fact, did you know, Mr. Speaker, that in

Kitchener Centre we were the first jurisdiction in all of Canada to use the blue bin? In fact, we invented it.

Interjections.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Yes. And we were one of the early adopters of the green bin system. So we are showing leadership by taking action to support a circular economy, a system where nothing is wasted. Invaluable materials destined for landfill are put back into the economy without negative effects on people or the environment.

We can look at other places around the world to see how they are doing this. I know, for instance, that in some European countries there are manufacturers that are responsible for appliances from start to finish, for the entire life of the appliance. If you were to buy a refrigerator, a particular company would be responsible for the fridge 20 or 30 years later. After it breaks—it dies—they would have to come and take it away and worry about recycling this. So these are the sorts of things that we could be looking at.

The draft strategy that was introduced last November provides a road map for our actions to support a circular economy. This was developed in response to what people told us across the province, what they were looking for. We were listening, and we do want to achieve those goals. It's going to keep Ontario's actions current. It's going to align efforts with our key partners. By enshrining the strategy in legislation and by requiring regular reports and reviews by the minister, it will show that we are addressing this important issue.

I know I'll be supporting this bill, Mr. Speaker, and I encourage my colleagues to do so as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to Bill 151. I wanted to follow up on something the member from Niagara Falls said. He talked about the fact that some of these bills—in fact, all of the bills—have a great name, and usually the content of the bill has absolutely nothing to do with the actual name they've selected. It's always a great-sounding name but never really the content. I prefer to call what the government does two things: I always seem to speak on many of the bills with the expression “ready, fire, aim,” because they come out with these things without consultation. So it's ready, they fire, there it is, and then they realize, “Oops, we forgot to talk to everybody again,” and so they begin to aim.

I found in this particular instance as well that while Bill 151 does include some parts of the PC plan in it—and those are obviously the parts that we like—there were major problems with the bill that are meeting opposition from the stakeholders. Why? Because they didn't consult the stakeholders thoroughly and properly. The stakeholders' concerns are primarily centred on the authority, their powers, the winding up of the recycling programs, policy statements, and enforcement, all without consultation with those very stakeholders.

Other than ready, fire, aim, I also think about how this government comes out with these wonderful ideas. They're aspirational-sounding, but they're never operational. The sound bites are perfect, but they never give any real thought to how we are going to operate this, and I think that's what the member from Niagara Falls was referring to. It was aspirational but not really operational.

I've seen that in this one as well, Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to talk about this. I think that we require—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: —several changes to be made, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'll handle that; thank you.

The member for Kenora-Rainy River.

1750

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I wanted to thank the member from Niagara Falls for weighing in on this debate.

I wanted to pick up on one of the things that he talked about—actually, not that dissimilar from what the member from Nipissing talked about—and that is that the government, I think, sometimes gets stuck in their own frame of mind, thinking about how they're going to spin something to make it seem like they're doing something when maybe they're not, really. If you look at this bill, you see that there are two things that are missing: One, very obviously, is the substance—it's got a nice title—and the other piece, which is equally important, are the timelines.

What I wanted to do in the brief time I've got is bring that back to how a piece of legislation like this affects people on the ground. I wanted to particularly talk about some of the municipalities that are struggling with very high costs of operating landfills and recycling programs. The one I wanted to focus on, in particular, is that of Red Lake. Red Lake is in a unique situation, where it's essentially landlocked with mining claims. They have one landfill that's at the end of its lifespan and they're looking at ways to manage that landfill. They're also looking at how to deal with the extraordinary costs of shipping their recycling materials at least 250 kilometres outside of the community and how they do those things.

I also wanted to mention, very quickly, that I'm really proud of the work that Red Lake is doing, because what they did was they took a shed and they've turned it into a reusable shed to try to divert a lot of items that are still usable but that people maybe don't have time to sell or whatever. They're actually doing a bit of a freecycle thing, where they're taking those things out of the landfill.

Municipalities are leading the charge. They're doing their part in bringing down their costs to be mindful of the environment. It's really incumbent upon this government to put the rubber to the road. They have to follow up. There has to be substance, and there also have to be timelines.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm very pleased to speak to Bill 151. After listening to the debate, it has been very clear that the majority of the members are in support of this bill. It is about time that the bill passes second reading and be referred to the committee, where the real work happens. Members from all parties will have an opportunity to hear from relevant stakeholders and, if they so choose, they can bring amendments to strengthen the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Niagara Falls has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Well, thank you. I didn't finish my presentation, but there are a couple of points here that I think are very important, particularly this one: In 2013, the Ontario waste sector was responsible for nine megatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions—we understand that—5% of the provincial total. But here's the part that really jumps out at you: 93% of those emissions came from waste sent to landfill. So you can imagine what we could do if we fix it.

We as members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario—and simply as people who live in this province—have a responsibility to take substantial action to reduce our waste production, to reduce the amount of waste in landfills and, in turn, to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases we're putting into the atmosphere. We need to have proper waste diversion programs here in our great province of Ontario so that we can eliminate the need for new landfills cluttering up our natural beauty. Quite frankly, we need proper waste diversion programs here in the province of Ontario based on a system of individual

producer responsibility, and we need to ensure that missing details of this bill are not allowed to fall by the wayside, or end up in a landfill.

That was supposed to be funny. Nobody really—

Mr. Victor Fedeli: That was a good one. I likes that one, Wayne.

Mr. Wayne Gates: It was okay? It was all right? I wasn't sure on that.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: You need some new writers, Gatesy.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Hey, I need new writers.

The bill has no meat, and that's an issue. The problem with that is that we need to do everything to fight and preserve our planet, and we need to do that not just for ourselves but for our kids and our grandkids.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Point of order, Mr. Speaker: When I was in the chair, I erred and I referred to the member from Niagara Falls as the member from Welland. I'd like to correct the record and let the record note that he's actually the member from Niagara Falls. My apologies to the member.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Apology accepted. Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being five to 6, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1755.

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Gila Martow, Kathryn McGarry
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First Session, 41st Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Thursday 24 March 2016

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Jeudi 24 mars 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 24 March 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 24 mars 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING ONTARIO'S TRAILS ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE SOUTIEN AUX SENTIERS DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 18, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act to enact the Ontario Trails Act, 2016 and to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 100, Loi édictant la Loi de 2016 sur les sentiers de l'Ontario et modifiant diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: Good morning, everyone. As the Ontario PC critic for tourism, culture and sport, it's an honour for me to rise on behalf of Her Majesty's official opposition to give our leadoff speech on Bill 100, An Act to enact the Ontario Trails Act, 2016 and to amend various Acts, or as the bill has been more commonly referred to, the Ontario Trails Act, 2015.

Off the top, I just want to say that it's really with mixed emotions that I'm standing here today. On one hand, as the MPP for Leeds–Grenville, I'm always so very eager to raise awareness about the hundreds of kilometres of year-round trails that run through my riding. I could spend an hour speaking about these trails and why everyone in Ontario should take some time, visit my riding and experience these wonderful recreational opportunities. But I can't do that, Speaker.

I can't do that because I have a responsibility as a member of this Legislature to discuss the very serious concerns I have with Bill 100 and how the bill is actually a threat to Ontario trails. I'm going to outline why the bill's method of establishing easements for trails on private property—this is very important—actually overshadows some of the very positive aspects that are in the Ontario Trails Act.

I want to acknowledge right off the top—right at the very beginning of the speech—that there are some very good things in this legislation. As my leader has said many times, if there are some things that are good for Ontario—no matter who brings them up in the Legis-

lature—we should mention it, and I want to acknowledge that there are some good things in this bill that we want to support. However, there are some things that I think are raising very valid concerns.

Our party, I think most people acknowledge, is a very strong advocate of the incredible trail system that our province boasts today. In Ontario, the system is made up of some 2,500 individual trails that stretch over 80,000 kilometres through some of the most beautiful scenery we have in this province. Our caucus supports initiatives that would enhance and expand this network of trails. We understand that these trails can play an important role in encouraging Ontarians to lead healthy, active lives.

When we talk about our ability to control health care spending, there's no question that prevention measures are absolutely the best investment we can make. A healthier, more active population is something that we all want to see. And if we want to talk just straight economics, we all know that trails are so very good for our economy. Already, Ontario's network of trails help to generate an estimated \$2 billion—that's billion with a B—in economic activity in this province.

Whether they live in Ontario or are coming from another part of Canada or from somewhere else in the world, people are eager to get out and explore our province and our province's trail system. There's no better way to do it than by hiking, biking, skiing, riding a snowmobile or an ATV or a horse, or even paddling a canoe or kayak on one of our world-class trails, especially—I have to give a plug—in my great riding of Leeds–Grenville, because we've got some great things happening in the riding.

I'm going to speak later about how Bill 100 can benefit Ontario's trails, and those outstanding organizations and individuals who maintain and promote them. The minister mentioned last month in his lead-off that there are almost 1,000 clubs in every corner of the province playing an active role in looking after our trail system. I want to take this opportunity this morning to personally thank these volunteers for their dedication and for their tireless work to make sure those 80,000 kilometres of trails are accessible and are safe for all Ontarians to enjoy.

In fact, the reason that I have such mixed emotions about this bill is based on what I'm hearing from some of those volunteers. Over the past few months, they've been telling me that Bill 100 is actually a threat to the future of our trails network.

When we debate legislation in this House, usually we're talking about the impact a bill is going to have if it

gets passed into law. That's what we usually talk about. As opposition MPPs, it's our job to outline the possible problems we believe legislation will create if it gets passed as is. Maybe some of the government members might even rise today to tell us how unfounded some of my concerns or my colleagues' concerns are, and that they're going to be okay. But what we're seeing, and this is what the crux of the issue is today, is something completely different with Bill 100. Even though we're in the very early stages of debate on second reading, the bill has already had an impact on trails in this province, and for reasons I'm about to get into, unfortunately the impact is not a good one for those who maintain and enjoy using Ontario trails.

We can think of any trail network as being like the links in a chain, so think about that when I'm speaking this morning. If those links are intact, the bond is strong. We know that in Ontario, many sections of trails run on private property. That means the links in that chain are held together by a relationship between the property owner and the trail group. The fact that we have such an incredible network of trails linked in Ontario is all the proof that we need to know that the system's working. But Bill 100 changes the dynamic in the relationship between property owners and trails groups. It's a dramatic change.

What we've seen already happening is that the links in the chain that are trying to hold this trails network together—some of them have gone missing. The chain is broken, and what is happening with these relationships is a direct result of concerns that property owners have with schedule 1 of the Ontario Trails Act that we're debating this morning.

I'm asking you, Speaker, and I'm asking members this morning to think about that. We've only had one hour of debate—well, we'll have two hours after I'm finished this morning—and we've already had concerns about this bill that have shut down some trail sections. In many other cases, trail groups have been put on notice by property owners that if Bill 100 does pass as is, they'll be locking their gates too.

That's not idle speculation from the opposition benches about what might happen; it's the reality. It's what's happening right now in Ontario. Snowmobile and ATV clubs in my riding of Leeds–Grenville and other parts of the province are dealing with this issue today, after just one hour of debate, and it all has to do with the fact that schedule 1 of Bill 100 creates a process for the establishment of easements and covenants.

0910

Before I get into any detail on the specific concerns with those easement provisions, I want to recap, because I think it's very important for the debate today, how we got to this point.

Most of us in the Legislature know that the Ontario Trails Act was tabled for first reading almost a year ago. In fact, it was May 12, 2015. Bill 100 languished on the order paper without much notice throughout the fall session. It wasn't called for debate by the time the House

rose in December. Certainly it was a bit of a surprise to me. After all, the bill was prominent. It was featured prominently in the minister's mandate letter from Premier Wynne. Introducing trails legislation is listed as the very first priority for the minister: "creating a healthier Ontario through sport and active recreation." But as I said, this bill was flying under the radar throughout the fall session.

It wasn't until we were preparing to come back to Queen's Park after Family Day that I began to receive the first rumbles of concern. In late January and early February, my office was hearing daily from snowmobile and ATV club officials about the increasing number of property owners who were threatening to tear up trail access agreements. As I mentioned, some were actually notifying the clubs that they were closing off access immediately. That is not perceived; it actually happened.

This e-mail from Greg Potvin, who is president of the Thousand Island ATV Club in the Gananoque area, was typical of what I was hearing:

"As president of the Thousand Island ATV Club we are being bombarded with requests from landowners to shut down our trail system....

"The landowner agreements for the Ontario Federation of All Terrain Vehicles can be a delicate one. Most of our agreements come with a one-year trial.

"Luckily we have not had an issue and have not lost a single part of our trail due to abuse. However the minute Bill 100 was presented to us in a newspaper article, we are struggling to survive.

"The bill will not only make it hard to keep what we have right now but it will make it impossible for us to create a much larger trail system.

"With the ATV and power sports industry growing with much-needed trails that you yourself have played a part in will be gone forever.

"I understand what the bill is trying to do but it is more damaging than good. Our goal is to have one ATV trail system across Ontario for the enjoyment of the outdoor enthusiast.

"This bill will bring that goal to its knees.

"As a small club in a rural farm community if this passes the second reading we will be done. I know of a few other larger clubs who might be in the same situation, but I will let them speak for themselves.

"So I ask you to think about your stance on this issue and realize the negative impact it will have on all trail systems.

"Any encouragement you can give to stop Bill 100 would be appreciated by myself and our club.

"Yours truly,

"Greg Potvin, president,

"Thousand Island ATV Club."

As I said, that was one of the many e-mails, calls and letters I received. The bottom line from each of them was that Bill 100 may be well-intended, but as Greg wrote, "it is more damaging than good."

There's something else that jumped out at me in Greg's e-mail. That was the fact that his club hadn't even

heard about the trails bill until a newspaper article appeared in late January. Local snowmobile clubs told me the very same thing, exactly the same thing. Not one of the property owners who were calling and stopping into my constit office knew anything about Bill 100 either. I know the minister in his lead-off talked about the consultation process that the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport undertook before the legislation was tabled, but let's take a closer look at just what this consultation looked like.

First off, those discussions the minister referred to in his lead took place way back in the fall of 2013. Based on what the clubs and property owners in my riding were reporting to me, they obviously weren't part of them. I certainly don't recall meetings at the Athens snowmobile club or the Grenville snowmobile club to let their club members and the property owners whose lands their trails cross know that they were going on. Nobody knew. Of course, even if they were brought into the conversation back in 2013, what good would it have done? They weren't discussing a bill and its specific provision to fundamentally alter the relationship between trail groups and property owners.

What they were discussing was the concept of legislation to promote and enhance the Ontario trails network. So of course ministry staff were going to return with plenty of reports that groups were supportive of a concept to raise awareness and public support about trails. In the absence of something specific, who is actually going to disagree? Who is actually going to disagree at one of those consultations?

I'm always frustrated with this government and their view of what meaningful consultation actually looks like. Taking a vague idea for a bill to promote and enhance trail usage out for a tour and then posting it for comment doesn't represent consultation. People can't provide comment until they actually know what you're proposing.

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: The minister can have his two minutes to comment after I'm done. I can't wait to hear what he has to say.

The government's approach to consultation would be bad enough at any time, but it's absolutely shameful when it's combined with the arrogant way this Liberal government manages the legislative process once a bill is introduced. We see them invoke closure more and more often to choke off consultation and debate in this Legislature. What they actually do is deprive our members of a chance to tell the government what our constituents are actually saying about pieces of legislation. Then, after they've programmed a bill at second reading, the government schedules a few days of hearings at Queen's Park. Holding them here in Toronto, once again, makes it almost impossible for Ontarians outside this bubble to be involved.

Let's use Bill 100, which is in front of us today, as an example of the process this government is following. Its so-called consultation took place two years ago. We've started debate, and I expect we'll get notice shortly that

the bill is going to be programmed. I suspect the minister has already had a chat with the government House leader, and the motion is probably drafted, for all I know. Even though this legislation is having a huge effect on rural Ontario, they'll probably have a couple of hearing dates scheduled for Toronto. They certainly won't agree with what I want to see. I've said it many times: I want to see a committee that travels to some parts of this province where the actual legislation is causing concern.

We had a short meeting with the minister the other day after question period, with my friends from Parry Sound–Muskoka, from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and from Nipissing. I'd really love the government to actually have some meaningful travelling hearings dates where this bill is actually causing concern. But, you know, the very last thing this government wants to do is provide an opportunity for Ontarians to validate what I'm saying.

I'm going to wait and see. I'm still convinced that the government will operate like they do with every other bill. There will be coffee-cup type hearings—there will be a couple of days; it won't be very much. Then, after we table our amendments—they'll probably get shot down; I hope they won't—the bill will come back for third reading, it will get programmed and off they go, just like that. The minister can sit back and check a box in his mandate letter that he has done it, without any concern for snowmobile clubs and ATV clubs, and they will be left to deal with the fallout.

It's a shameful process, and it completely excludes the voices of rural and northern Ontario on an issue that concerns them greatly. If government members wonder why they have such a huge credibility problem, I suggest that I've outlined a way they can deal with it in rural and northern Ontario. I really hope that we start having some meaningful travel and meaningful discussion at the committee level on some bills.

Speaker, I want to take the opportunity to return to the fallout from Bill 100 that happened as MPPs were preparing to come back for the spring session. I said earlier that ATV and snowmobile clubs in particular were facing a major problem. Their trails were being shut down right at the very point when we were starting to get some actual winter weather conditions in eastern Ontario. Suddenly, property gates were being locked. As a result, sections of trails in Leeds–Grenville were closed for public access. Instead of being out there grooming trails, club volunteers were forced to talk to property owners, to plead with them. There was a lot of pleading going on in rural Ontario for those property owners to allow clubs to be able to access those trails.

0920

As the opposition critic, I was being contacted by clubs in other parts of Ontario that were experiencing the same thing. The member for Nickel Belt actually mentioned that this was happening in her riding during the questions-and-comments section of the minister's lead-off. I know, and I mentioned earlier, that my colleagues from Parry Sound–Muskoka and Nipissing were dealing with the same issue I was.

That's why I felt I had to act, Speaker. That's why on February 8 I wrote to Minister Coteau. I told him he had a problem on his hands with Bill 100, and I asked him to take it off the table. Given that we were talking about a piece of legislation that clearly hadn't been a priority for the government, I didn't think that was an unreasonable request, given what was happening in rural Ontario. This bill had sat on the order paper throughout the fall session and had not been called. It seemed reasonable, in my opinion, to ask the minister to take a step back, to get out there and meet with these groups, these snowmobile and ATV clubs, these property owners who were concerned with the bill.

Taking that initiative to have some meaningful consultation would have been a sign of good faith. It would have shown both sides of the issue, both property owners and trail groups, that the minister took it seriously. I truly believe that if the minister had chosen to take my advice and had decided to do what I asked, those questions and concerns on Bill 100 could have been addressed. The people would feel like their voices weren't ignored and that they weren't shut out of the process during that so-called consultation process two years ago on Bill 100.

I just can't for the life of me understand why the ministry would not want to take that advice and would not want to try to stop those gates from being locked. So, you know, it is what it is, Speaker. He didn't take my advice; he didn't take my suggestions. Those property gates in many cases are still locked, and others are threatening to follow suit if this bill does pass.

I've read Bill 100 so many times, and I know what schedule 1, section 12 says about easements. In fact, here's exactly what subsection 12(3) states, and this is very important to the discussion we are having this morning. Subsection 12(3): "An owner of land may grant an easement, with or without covenants, to one or more eligible bodies." To the minister, the word "may" is the key word here; it means that a granting of an easement is voluntary. So, in his mind, as minister, he thinks the problem is solved. I understand that no property owner who currently has an access or a land-use agreement with an ATV or a snowmobile club or any other trail organization will wake up one day with an easement suddenly in place. I know that that's not going to happen.

I want to stress that I'm not only saying it in the House today. When the trails in my riding were threatened with closure, I was doing what I could, I felt, to keep them open for the season. In fact, I wrote a letter to my snowmobile clubs in the riding and asked them to take it to property owners who were locking their gates. I'm going to read the letter that I sent, because I think it's important to know that outside of the House I was saying the same thing that I'm saying this morning. Here was what I said in my letter at the time:

"It is my understanding that Bill 100, if passed, will not automatically convert existing land-use agreements a property owner has with your club into an easement registered on title. That process would be voluntary.

"Nonetheless, I remain concerned that questions about this legislation threaten to put even more of Ontario's trail network at risk....

"Legislation to establish in law a new process to create trail easements represents a fundamental change to the relationship between property owners and trails groups.

"Clearly, the government should have recognized the potential for these concerns before tabling Bill 100 last May.

"Unfortunately, Minister Coteau has failed to heed my request to delay second reading, which began on February 18.

"As the opposition critic on this file, I'm going to continue to press the minister to hold direct consultations with those affected by this bill.

"We will also be proposing amendments to clarify the parts of Bill 100 that have caused property owners to terminate access agreements with your club and others.

"In the meantime, Minister Coteau has offered to have his ministry staff connect directly with property owners or trail groups to address their questions.

"I'd be pleased to put any of your club members or land-use-agreement holders in touch with the ministry."

It's important that I say that, because I was saying the same thing to property owners who were coming into my office, who attended my constit office in Brockville. They wanted me to tell them what to do about access, and my response was the same: "The bill won't force an easement, so give me some time. Give me some time to work on this with the government."

I told them that if I couldn't get the bill taken off the table, I'd fight to make sure there were some changes. I certainly wasn't trying to stoke the fear of property owners, so I can stand here today and tell the minister that even more trails in my riding were closed down.

But even if we all agree that easements are voluntary, the minister has failed to recognize why there is such a concern out there. They begin—and I said it before—with the word "may." In my opinion, this leaves this section of the bill far too open for confusion. It's all well and good for the minister to say that the word "may" is clear enough in his mind, but it's not his property we're talking about.

At a minimum, we want to keep those trails open and reopen the sections that were shut down. If we want that, we need to rewrite this section of Bill 100. The legislation must clearly state that any easement agreements will be voluntary: not "may," Speaker, but "will."

Even better, the minister could incorporate the same language into the bill that he used in a statement he released in an attempt to quell the fears of property owners. That is, "an easement pursuant to Bill 100, if passed, would be a voluntary agreement between a landowner and an eligible body or bodies. No property owner would be compelled to provide an easement unless they agreed to do so." That's the minister's own words, Speaker. They should be incorporated in the bill.

I'm pleased the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs has also recognized the problem with this section

of the legislation. In a March 10 letter to the minister, Mike Clewer, director of strategy and business development with OFSC, wrote:

"We do, however, believe that Bill 100 would be much more palatable to our important landowner partners should section 12 be amended to provide greater clarity to the areas that are causing concern.

"As a consequence, we would be very supportive of any process for consultation and action that would accomplish this."

The letter also makes clear what I've been talking about this morning: There is just so much at risk with this bill. OFSC notes that it manages 32,000 kilometres of groomed trail in Ontario, 60% of which is under land use agreements. Writes Mr. Clewer, "The threat caused by uncertainties about Bill 100 is all too real and it risks our ability to continue generating the \$1.7 billion in economic activity snowmobiling brings to Ontario each year."

The OFSC is right, Speaker. Those land use agreements are the backbone of the trails network in Ontario, and they exist only because of the years of trust and mutual respect that have developed between those property owners and those trails organizations.

These agreements are not negotiated with lawyers or real estate agents representing the parties. They're worked out over a cup of coffee at the kitchen table, and they're sealed with a handshake, representing both parties. Property owners open their gates. They allow trails to cross their land because they know and they respect these organizations, Speaker. Property owners maintain their trails and work together with trails organizations, and for the most part, they are their friends. They are their neighbours. They want to provide access and they're comfortable doing it because if there's a problem, they can just pick up the phone and they can just deal with it.

Bill 100 fundamentally alters the dynamic, because it introduces the government into the picture through a formal process to create easements—and not just any government, Speaker: this Liberal government, one with a well-established track record of running roughshod over rural Ontario and the people who live there in the pursuit of their agenda.

0930

Don't take my word for it; just visit any rural community that has had an industrial wind farm forced on it after declaring themselves an unwilling host. We saw this happen once again with the recent latest wind farm contracts that were announced.

Here's a quote for you, Speaker. Here's what Mayor François St. Amour of the municipality The Nation had to say about this government's lack of respect for rural Ontarians. Here is His Worship's quote:

"Since we declared ourselves unwilling hosts, we thought we had it made ... Because there was some talk in the last provincial election that they would honour municipalities that declared themselves unwilling. But I guess that was just another electoral promise." Mayor St. Amour was responding to the fact that his unwilling municipality will now get a 32-megawatt wind farm.

Another eastern Ontario municipality that declared itself an unwilling host is North Stormont—there's my friend from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. North Stormont is getting a 100-megawatt wind farm. That's the kind of behaviour that causes rural property owners to distrust this government and what they're doing. It's why they fear what's lurking in sections of this legislation that hinge upon the word "may."

Postmedia's Jim Merriam, whose columns on rural Ontario appear in many, many newspapers, examined this distrust when he wrote about Bill 100 this month. He started out by noting Bill 100 isn't a conspiracy by the government to confiscate private property, but he continues. Here's his quote:

"If Bill 100 ... was not hatched out of a conspiracy it must have resulted from incompetence, breathtaking incompetence.

"Who in their right mind would gather 250 organizations together to begin crafting a bill to support and sustain the vast system of trails throughout Ontario and not include a single landowner?"

It's true. Jim is very much in touch with what's on the mind of rural Ontarians. He knows the fallout that's going to happen if Bill 100 passes the way it is. That's why he called on urban Ontarians to speak out. Here's his quote about that:

"The residents of cities such as Toronto, Ottawa, London and North Bay should be just as upset as rural landowners about Bill 100.

"Many of those landowners are likely to start closing trails across their land, up to and including sections of one of Ontario's greatest assets, the Bruce Trail, if this bill isn't repealed.

"With help from city folks who have an interest in trails as well as an interest in what's best for the province; rural Ontario might have a chance to get through to Queen's Park on this critical issue."

I've discussed the problem with the wording on section 12 that deals with the granting of easements. However, that's not the only part of the section that's a concern to property owners. Subsection 8 states:

"Assignment

"(8) An easement may be assigned by an eligible body to another eligible body, but the assignment must be in writing and must be registered...."

Again, this has a major impact on property rights, and it's a big change in the relationship between property owners and these trails groups. Under the legislation, eligible bodies are defined as including some of the following: the crown; an agency, board or commission of the crown; a municipality; a school board; a conservation authority; or a charitable organization. There are many other groups on the list, too.

Let me be clear about what this section means. If a property owner enters into an easement agreement with one organization, that agreement can be transferred by the organization to another. You can understand why this would have alarm bells going off among property owners. Many feel comfortable formalizing an easement

agreement with an organization like a snowmobile or ATV club, but there's no way they would have that comfort if the easement was suddenly transferred to a municipality or a conservation authority, for example.

They like their agreement the way it is, but, ultimately, many have expressed to me that they would be uncomfortable with a transfer. Again, I simply fail to understand why the transferability is included in the legislation. If any member from the government side wants to clarify that, I'd be more than happy to listen to their explanation. I can't imagine anyone agreeing to sign an easement with such unpredictability about who might end up holding it.

On that basis, I see no reason to include assignment provisions in the legislation. In fact, I call on the minister to agree with me that the entire section dealing with easements should be removed from Bill 100. That would provide the assurance to give property owners the comfort to restore those land use agreements and it would ensure that the links in Ontario's chain of trails stay strong and stay connected.

I have to say I was disappointed, given the controversy expressed about easements, that the minister didn't really address the issue in any form of detail during his lead-off. That left the work to his parliamentary assistant. I mean no insult to my neighbour, the member for Kingston and the Islands. We work together on a number of issues, but Ontarians deserve to hear directly from the minister about why easements were included in this part of the bill.

We certainly didn't hear it either from his PA. In fact, her remarks, in trying to defend the inclusion of section 12, ended up proving why it's such a problem. She said that we need to provide this method of establishing easements because, without them, "trail managers may lose access to the land, or face costly rerouting." Well, Speaker, I can tell you exactly what those trail managers are dealing with right now. They're having to deal with rerouting; they're having to deal with sections that are closed. Exactly what she said it should be there for is what's causing the absolute opposite effect.

She went on to say, "Setting out a mechanism for trail easements would help address this issue." No, it's not going to address the issue. As I've explained, if the bill passes, it's going to make matters worse. We're trying to fix a problem with this bill that doesn't exist. The bill has caused trail sections to be closed down. It has caused those friendly agreements to be cancelled.

There are some other things that troubled me in the remarks that day of the government's lead-off. The PA dismissed the concerns expressed by property owners about the bill as merely confusion based on what she called "misinformation." At the same time, she noted that the easements were necessary because they align "with stakeholder requests for a legislative mechanism to allow trail easements."

The message here is that during the government's consultation, some trail groups and organizations thought easements would be a good idea, but what about the other side of the equation, Speaker? The people who actually

give those agreements on their land, the people who actually have those trails cross their private property, weren't the ones who were consulted. I think most people on the other side acknowledge that those property owners weren't consulted about this easement provision in the legislation. The government now says that they must be confused, but they were never consulted. I ask you: Is it any wonder why there's this level of distrust when those voices were not part of the consultations two and a half years ago?

Before I move on, in the time I have left I want to discuss some of the other details in Bill 100. I want to be clear what I wanted to see in order to give this bill my support: First, we need the minister to accept the invitation of my caucus to attend meetings. We spoke to him again yesterday about meetings in Nipissing and Parry Sound-Muskoka, so I take him at his word on the floor of the House that his staff are going to have those meetings. There are concerned ridings, there are public meetings and we think the ministry needs to deliver on their promise to see those people.

We need to revisit section 12 in schedule 1 of the bill. As I've said, I'd like to see that section removed entirely, but at the very least the language needs to state clearly that any easement is voluntary and that no property owner would be compelled to sign one.

Finally, I'd like a commitment from the government that the minister is going to support my call to hold committee meetings in rural and northern parts of Ontario.

I'm going to take a significant amount of the time I have left to talk about some of the things we support in the bill. As I said at the outset, I'm largely supportive of what I see in schedules 2 through 6. The schedules contain amendments to five separate pieces of legislation: the Motorized Snow Vehicles Act, the Occupiers' Liability Act, the Off-Road Vehicles Act, the Public Lands Act and the Trespass to Property Act.

I want to particularly say that I was pleased to see that Bill 100 does strengthen the Trespass to Property Act to give more protection to property owners. The bill does incorporate measures that my caucus colleague the member for Dufferin-Caledon, Sylvia Jones, put forward in her private member's Bill 36, the Respecting Private Property Act, 2014.

0940

If passed, Bill 100 would eliminate the current \$1,000 limit on compensation for damages. There's no question that that \$1,000 limit, set in 1980, was completely inadequate in compensating property owners for damage caused by a trespasser. If passed, it would raise the maximum fine for anyone convicted of trespassing under the act to \$10,000. Currently, the maximum level is set at \$2,000, a figure that was established, I was told, in 1989, 27 years ago. Again, I think we all agree \$10,000 is a more acceptable deterrent, and it's overdue that we establish this higher ceiling. It's a message that an offence of trespassing is one that is taken seriously by the courts.

I know that farmers I represent in Leeds-Grenville have questioned—we met with the Ontario Federation of

Agriculture yesterday in our caucus lounge for a break-fast meeting. I think most farmers wanted more of Ms. Jones's Bill 36 to be adopted. The OFA, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, has called for a minimum fine of \$500 to be set, something that the member for Dufferin-Caledon included in her bill. In our meeting yesterday with the OFA, they also pushed for the Trespass to Property Act to give police broader powers to focus on farm safety and biosecurity implications associated with trespassing.

Under section 5 of the bill, there are actually some significant updates to the Public Lands Act in order to enhance the protection to crown lands and strengthen enforcement. The bill adds section 69.2 to the act, which states that any person who causes prescribed damage to crown land or crown property on crown land is guilty of an offence, but it's important to note that the prescribed damage isn't defined. That's being left up to regulation. Again, these updated protection and enforcement measures are necessary, but it shows that the government is going to deal with at least part of this bill through regulation. It's going to ensure that those who cause damage to our treasured public resources are going to face, I believe, more appropriate consequences than before this bill was tabled. It would include not only the fines but it would also empower the court to order someone convicted to rehabilitate or repair the damage.

If the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry were required to do the work, the amendments would allow the government to recoup any cost in court. Further, we see amendments to increase the majority of penalties for offences under the act, including maximum fine for first-time offenders and higher fines for repeated convictions.

There is one other change with regard to penalties under the act that I want to mention. In addition to higher maximum fines, the act is amended to allow that anyone who gained a monetary benefit from an offence on public lands would be handed a fine equal to that benefit. In terms of enforcing these new provisions designed to protect crown land, we see two major changes being brought in: First, MNRF officers empowered under the act will have new authority to stop vehicles and conduct inspections on crown lands; and it would give the officers the authority to arrest an individual without a warrant if they suspect that an offence under the act has been committed.

In terms of the changes to one of the other sections, the Occupiers' Liability Act, it's trying to reduce the risk of liability on trails groups and property owners. It clarifies that payment of a fee incidental to entering the trail or participating in an activity such as parking does not prevent the free-entry standard of care from applying to the individual. In other words, someone coming onto a trail under those circumstances, if the organization maintaining the trail has received public funding, does so at their own risk. So there's that liability risk factor that's there. Of course, the requirement of a trail organization to not intentionally injure a trail user or act with reckless disregard for their presence remains.

Having spent so much time earlier on the portion of section 100 dealing with easements, I should also high-

light some of the other components of schedule 1. I think most people will agree that, if passed, having the opportunity to proclaim an annual Trails Week in Ontario, which begins on the Monday before the first Saturday in June—it would coincide with International Trails Day. I think most people realize that a proclamation section of the bill—pretty warm and fuzzy, Speaker; I don't think you're going to get much anger on the opposition benches over that. The bill also would authorize the minister to recognize a trail as an Ontario trail of distinction, as well as establishing a trail classification system and best practices.

So, in general, these schedules of the bill move us in a direction that's going to allow us to create awareness and use of the trails. Listen, I said before those sections are pretty warm and fuzzy. It's an admirable goal that we're trying to accomplish. This is a great economic driver, our trail system.

We all like to boast about the scenery we represent. I'm going to take a few minutes to talk about some of the trails in my riding; I'm pretty proud of them. This stretch of highway has some of the most impressive vistas you'll ever see, so I want to give a shout-out to the stretch of Ontario's waterfront trail that's a 36-kilometre stretch. The Thousand Islands Recreational Trail is just east of Gananoque. It runs along the St. Lawrence River, offering incredible views of the Thousand Islands. Our local municipalities, the united counties of Leeds and Grenville, along with the former Harper government, teamed up with the St. Lawrence Parks Commission two years ago. They gave this trail an incredible facelift. It was repaved, it was widened at a cost of \$2 million, and the results, Speaker, can be seen on any weekend; almost every day you'll see the results. In the spring, summer and fall, cyclists of all ages, horseback riders, hikers, runners and rollerbladers flock to the trail. In the winter, snowmobilers and skiers show that it's truly a year-round facility.

It's far from the only destination in my riding for those looking for a trail adventure. Brockville's scenic Brock Trail has an incredibly dedicated group called the Friends. The volunteers have already worked with the municipality to expand the trail and reinstall a bridge over one of the most picturesque sections. Hikers of every level of experience will find a trail to suit their tastes at the Charleston Lake Provincial Park, and Limerick Forest, managed by the united counties of Leeds and Grenville, celebrated its 75th anniversary last year. It features incredible trails for cyclists, ATV-motocross drivers, horseback riding, skiing, snowmobiles and hiking. The northeast corner of my riding is the municipality of North Grenville, and it has an extensive and well-identified trails network that covers an incredible 150 kilometres.

In every corner of my riding there is something for hikers to explore. I want to give a shout-out to Foley Mountain Trails. They get a bird's-eye view of the village of Westport and the UNESCO world heritage Rideau waterway. For anyone interested in paying us a visit, there are two great resources they can turn to for

more information. The united counties of Leeds and Grenville's website at leedsgrenville.com has a great listing of the trails and links to trails in Leeds and Grenville. I also want to recognize a wonderful group, the Frontenac Arch Biosphere. The Frontenac Arch Biosphere has a FAB trails tour section. They maintain a very detailed listing of trail experiences on their website at frontenacarchbiosphere.ca.

I hope that in my time this morning, I've explained why I can support some of what's in Bill 100, but when it comes to what I call the poison pill—and I believe very, very strongly that this bill does contain a poison pill. By introducing the process of establishing easements, the government has taken, I think, a step too far, particularly having done so much work on this bill without properly consulting property owners. I think it's very important that we take those property owners' views to heart when it comes to crafting a bill of this magnitude.

We're going to spend a lot of time during the debate on this bill, I hope, praising the thousands of volunteers who give so freely of their time to maintain our trail system. I welcome that opportunity and I heartily join in praising those men and women who work so hard to keep the trails open in my riding. But you know, Speaker, this debate is too important, and I think we cannot lose sight of what property owners contribute to Ontario being able to boast such a world-class network. We have to listen to what those men and women who allow access to their property have to say in this debate. I've told this to the minister; I've told it to the minister's staff.

0950

I remember, during the Pan Am Games, the minister chastising our former critic, saying, "You didn't show up for the briefing." Well, I actually asked to have a briefing on this trails bill, because I wanted to meet with the staff to let them know what they were doing and let them know the concerns. I let them know, that day, the same thing I'm letting the House know today. That was weeks ago, and I haven't seen a meaningful recognition that those concerns are valid.

The minister stated in the House that he would meet and that his staff would reach out to those that felt disenfranchised by this bill. We did see some of that, but there were some significant players—northern Ontario. When I look at the trails system that the member for Nipissing, the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka and the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke have—the amount of trails that they have—when they have a public meeting, and they read the minister's words in Hansard, there's an expectation that that word is going to be significant, and that the ministry is going to take it seriously.

I believe very strongly that without those property owners, without that agreement, we're going to lose so much of our system that we've worked so hard to maintain and that we've worked so hard to enhance. The problem here, once again—I hate to it keep saying it—is that this government is ignoring that very significant part of the debate, the side of the coin that I think is very important. The government has focused so much on what

trail groups want that they haven't spent any time talking to property owners about their concerns.

I think the minister is missing a real opportunity to generate some goodwill by doing the amendments and by having those public hearings that I'm suggesting. Instead, his decision to rush ahead—and I say rush ahead—by calling for second reading debate really stirred the concerns that I had farmers talking to me about when I attended the annual Leeds Federation of Agriculture banquet in Lansdowne last Friday night.

I had one gentleman in particular who engaged me on this bill. He is far from an activist or an anti-government individual, but you know what? He's genuinely tired of what he sees happening all around him: All levels of government, along with an assortment of agencies and organizations, are dictating what he can and what he can't do on his own property. As he put it to me, "They're trying to control our lives, Steve." That's what he said to me.

Again, he wasn't an activist, and he wasn't someone who I would categorize as anti-government, but he looks at Bill 100 and, with all the other red tape he has to put up with, he doesn't have time to ponder what the word "may" really means when it comes to his property rights. He knows that this is just one more thing for him to worry about. So in his case, he just said to me, "You know, I might just as well just cancel my agreement on April 1. I'm not going to worry about it. I'm just going to jump away." He knows that there's already a process in place to allow trails to go across his property, so why would the government then introduce the concept of easements if they weren't up to something? That's honestly what he feels.

What is he going to do if this bill passes as it's written today? You know what he's going to do if it passes exactly the way it's written today, if we have what I said is going to happen, if we have a closure debate and the bill goes to committee for a couple of weeks in Toronto? He's going to call up the snowmobile club, and he's going to say, "I'm out." He's going to close his mind to it. Then we're going to have a situation that I believe no one in this Legislature wanted, where we're going to have significant chaos, frustration and confusion over a bill that languished on the order paper. Let's face it, Speaker: The government has bills that they rush through. Regardless of how this was placed in Michael Coteau's mandate letter and how much of a priority, if you read it—and I invite anyone listening today to go on the website, read his mandate letter, see how prominently this bill was placed as a priority for him and then go back and think of a consultation that took place two and a half years ago. Not one single property owner was part of the discussion.

When the minister did his lead-off, he introduced me to all the stakeholders who were sitting in the government gallery—and I'm looking around. There are not too many people in the gallery this morning to hear my comments, but—

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm here.

Mr. Steve Clark: I appreciate it, Gatesy.

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: I appreciate it, guys.

Again, it just fundamentally changes people's faith in the government by not having meaningful consultation, by not having all voices at the table on a bill that significantly changes a relationship.

Speaker, I talked about it earlier. These aren't agreements that are drafted by lawyers. They're friends; they are neighbours. They sit down and discuss what they're doing to the trails that season and how they're going to access property. The minister can write all the letters to the editor he wants; it's not going to change the fact that trails were shut down in this province because this bill was brought for second reading. No one on the government side can argue with my comments that just the simple tabling of this bill, without the proper consultation for those individual clubs—and don't take my word for it. Call a club yourself. Have members call clubs in other members' ridings and ask if they were part of the consultation. Maybe the parent organization was. Maybe they were involved in this high-level discussion about promoting trails.

I even said that there are sections of this bill that I call "motherhood and apple pie." Who's going to be against proclaiming a trails week? Who's going to disagree with the government taking on a priority to promote all of the good things that 80,000 kilometres of trails provide our residents in the province? No one is going to say they don't agree with that, but I'll tell you what they're going to disagree with: They're going to disagree with property owners not being part of the conversation. Again, it just feeds into the cynicism that's in rural Ontario and feeds into this concern that this government doesn't care about their voices.

This is a very significant part of rural recreation in my riding. This is a big deal for ridings like Leeds–Grenville. To have individual agreements basically torn up because the government couldn't get out of the bubble in Toronto and actually explain to people and communicate to people what's going on is ridiculous, Speaker.

Do you know what? They need to basically listen to property owners, they need to listen to the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs, and they need to listen to me. If they were listening, they'd make a commitment to, first of all, amend the bill, to look at those sections of the bill that I spoke about this morning, to go out to those property owners, those ATV clubs, snowmobile clubs and those other trails organizations and make an effort to communicate to them on what they would like to see changed in the bill, how they would like to see that relationship continue for many years to come. They would not continue to do what they've always done and call the legislation—because this hour this morning by myself is a signal to rural Ontario and northern Ontario that this government doesn't care.

I would ask members of the government side—I see a number of members here today. I would ask you to talk to Minister Coteau about this bill, about ensuring that the voices of those men and women who allow access on their private property for snowmobile clubs, ATV clubs

and trails organizations are heard, and not just allow 10 hours of debate and a closure motion or a time allocation motion or two days in Toronto for hearings to try to fix this problem, because the problem won't be fixed.

1000

I want the problem to be fixed. I want those trails in Leeds–Grenville to reopen. I want trails in Leeds–Grenville to expand. I see the benefit of these trails in my community, but what I get very angry about is the government ignoring those rural voices. This is a big change—perceived or otherwise—in how trails are being managed in the province.

I will tell you something: If we only have eight more hours of debate and the minimum amount of time at committee, this is going to be a disaster. You know, Speaker, if I see that the government isn't going to take any of my amendments, maybe I'll try to amend the title to say the "Ontario trails disaster act," because that's what it's going to be. There will be more trails shut down, there will be more frustration, there will be more anger in rural Ontario.

So my message today—and I'll close up with just this. My message today is: We need the government to listen. We all talk about the things that are inscribed here on the wall: "Hear the other side: Audi alteram partem." I think that's the right term: "Hear the other side." This is a bill that they need to hear the other side of. They need to bring in those property owners involved in this.

I want to thank my caucus for indulging me in my speech this morning, and I really, truly look forward to comments and questions by all three parties.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'm just sitting here reading a letter from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. It doesn't look to me like they're asking for tons of amendments, but what they're really looking for—and we often see this with legislation that is introduced in this House: a lack of real consultation in the beginning, before the bill is tabled, and then a lack of enforcement at the end of the day once the legislation is passed. We see that in all ministries. I have over the last five years.

We have a great trail system in Niagara, a trail system through Welland, and I can tell you that the issue of enforcement there as well is a problem on the trails. It's 140 kilometres of trails between Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. They run along the Welland Canal and the Welland River as well. They're non-motorized trails for the most part. Unfortunately, motorized vehicles like ATVs and, in the winter, snowmobiles try and use these trails. Early on, when the 10 kilometres or so was built right in the city of Welland, it wasn't open for very long when an ATV actually ran down a woman on rollerblades who was very, very seriously injured; she had to be airlifted to a critical care hospital outside of the region of Niagara.

The problem always comes down to the fact that there's no enforcement. We've put up signs saying, "No motorized vehicles," but if there is no police presence at any time on these trails, if it no one is ever receiving a

fine, if it's never in the local media that somebody has been fined for using trails illegally, then people just continue to do those kinds of things.

I invite people to come and bike or walk or rollerblade along the Greater Niagara Circle Route. It is amazing. You can hit 96 wineries and breweries along that trail, all kinds of museums, and of course the great activities in Niagara Falls. I invite people to come and enjoy them, but I ask the government to pay attention to the amendments that the Federation of Agriculture is looking for.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I was listening to the member from Leeds–Grenville carefully, with a grain of salt, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, the minister is out consulting regularly. I know he's been talking to members opposite regularly. I saw him within the gallery with the member opposite and those concerned parties. The minister has agreed to attend public meetings. This is hardly arrogance. As the environment minister, I am going out across the province on climate change. The member from Leeds–Grenville is being absurd, calling it a disaster. The disaster for trails in Ontario is climate change. Over 30 years, our mean temperature in most of the trail areas will be eight degrees warmer, and four degrees warmer in the south, and that's based on two IPCC reports.

How much snow do you think there's going to be in eastern Ontario in 15 years for ATVs? Almost none. This is one of the great casualties of climate change: that we are going to lose a large part of our winter trail system.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Now they're all jeering me. Why are they doing that? Because they don't have a position on climate change. They're posing on climate change. You can hear it when you hear them on topics like this. They don't understand that what's at risk here, what the disaster is, is that we're losing our cross-country ski trails.

This is the party that forced amalgamations on cities, completely redrawing boundaries—no consultation. When I was mayor of Winnipeg, which they like to tease me about, I watched them download health and social service costs onto municipalities without compensating revenue, while in Manitoba they were uploading health and social services costs because the municipal property tax couldn't bear it. In the member's own area, his own party—after being a mayor in an area where 42% of highways and provincial roads were downloaded unilaterally without consultation on those municipalities, he talks about arrogance? That's the pot calling the kettle black.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I guess I was going to have a different tone, but I think the issue about this is the arrogance of this government. Just listen to them.

We're of the opinion that the bill was probably put there for good reason or good intentions, but look at the way people are responding to it. Listen. It's not like this

government ever listens, but we're going to lose these trails. Rural areas have been very happy to have their neighbours come out and cross their land, but now they're looking at this and they've been threatened by it, at least by perceived issues in this bill. The OFA is coming back. Obviously they weren't talked to; landowners weren't talked to.

Regardless of that, our comment is: Let's get out and fix this bill. We have some amendments. If we sit there and talk about climate change as an issue—we're talking about trails here, and people getting out. I heard our member from Leeds–Grenville talk about trying to get people out to exercise. That's the basis of this bill.

This government has the idea that if we don't do it, we don't go out and purchase easements and create these vast trails, it's not good enough. We have many times more of these private trails out there, or public trails, that don't belong to the government. The landowners in rural areas have been very good about creating these and giving a place for these people to go. I enjoy them myself. But to think now that we're going to lose them—just in my own township of South Glengarry, we have numerous trails across properties.

I encourage the government to get off their high horse and get out and listen to people and see why they're upset and why they're concerned, and reassure them. If there are some issues—the OFA have amendments; consider them. I've been at too many meetings where we go through amendments and, without even looking at them, they're voted down by this government because of the majority. Sit down and listen to the people, or we're going to lose a great natural resource that's not costing the government anything.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'll take some of those high horses down at the Fort Erie Race Track, if you want to send them my way.

It's always a pleasure to stand up and talk about my riding, particularly around trails in Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie. One of the things that makes my riding so incredible is that it's very vibrant, it has exciting cities, but it's beside some of the best-preserved nature and historic trails in all Ontario.

For example, you can come down to Niagara-on-the-Lake and take a stroll through the beautiful old town and then find a trail just a few minutes up the road in Queenston Heights. While exploring the Bruce Trail, you can walk through a historic battlefield from the War of 1812 and still experience the natural beauty of Niagara. It has incredible history with our trails. You can explore the Niagara River. I know that some people in the House have been down to Niagara-on-the-Lake, using many of the exciting trails that take you around the Niagara Gorge. You can walk, you can bike—and my colleague from Welland had an interesting comment. She said that you can bike through six wineries. That's interesting to me, because if you stop at every winery, I don't know how the biking's going to go, but that's something that we can look at.

Or you can go to Fort Erie and explore the Friendship Trail, which takes you to historic Fort Erie and Ridgeway. It's what makes Niagara so unique. You can literally walk through our nation's history, while at the same time explore our beautiful, preserved nature. I encourage everyone to come down this summer and come to Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Having said that, we have an opportunity to continue to grow the tourist industry through trails, for locals, for tourists and for jobs, so I'm looking forward to continuing this debate. What's important under Bill 100 is that we have to make sure we have that debate, we have that consultation, and that the bill doesn't hurt our trails, it doesn't hurt our tourism, it doesn't hurt our jobs. That's why we need to make sure that we don't cut off debate on this very, very important bill for all of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Leeds–Grenville for final comments.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to acknowledge the comments of the members for Welland, Niagara Falls and Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

It's interesting with the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. I really hope that the government does not continue the rhetoric to deflect back to the mid-1990s. This is an issue that's happening today in Ontario. There is a great opportunity for this government to make a connection. I'm just a little worried that with some of the rhetoric I heard this morning—and it may have been just that member—we're not going to get where I think we need to be.

I know the government members think that those land use agreements based on a handshake are an outdated notion in today's world, but let's look at what those old-fashioned agreements they mock me for supporting have accomplished. They're the basis for the trail system that we have in Ontario right now, which I think is the envy of many in the world. What has this government done with its ham-fisted attempt, I suggest, to modernize these agreements? And I'll use the word again: I know that the minister doesn't agree with me, but they've created chaos. They've put those trails in jeopardy.

Speaker, with all due respect, I've laid my comments on the record. I've laid, I feel, some reasonable amendments and suggestions on the table. The member from Welland echoed some of the concerns that the OFA has expressed to both of us. I'll take those handshake deals anytime—anytime—over what this government is offering today with Bill 100. It needs to be changed, and again, I'll take those handshakes over what they've given me today.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

VISITOR

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Point of order?

Mr. Chris Ballard: A point of order: I'd like to introduce Patrick Connor, who is the CEO of the Ontario Trails Council. He's in the members' gallery. Welcome.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Since it is now close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a delight to have Zachary Gan's family here in the public gallery: mother Patricia Gan and sister Zoey Hodgins. They will be in the public gallery this morning.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Please help me welcome two friends from my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham who are in the east members' gallery: Ming Man and Lisa Lai.

Hon. Mario Sergio: We have a nice young man in the House today who wants to pay some attention to our question period. He is from Revere retirement living: Adrian Kupescic. Welcome, and I hope you enjoy your stay with us this morning.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I wish to introduce a committee of delegates visiting us from Portugal this week on the occasion of the 35th anniversary of the Peniche Community Club in my riding of Davenport. With us today are Dr. Antonio José Correia, mayor of the town of Peniche; members of the musical group Os Nemanus; their host, João Freixo, president of the Peniche Community Club of Toronto; his wife Isabel; and Diana Maria, a volunteer. Welcome all to Queen's Park. Bem-vindos.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm delighted this morning to welcome Chris Neal, Peter Neal and Theresa Laird from Neal Brothers Foods, and also Nick Saul from The Stop, in the members' gallery. Welcome.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I would like to welcome Carol Barltrop, who helped out in our office the last little while, and Steve Hyndman from the great riding of Northumberland–Quinte West, the former CAO of the city of Belleville. Welcome.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to introduce two very important people who are visiting in the House today: Tom and Dawn Davidson, who are visiting from Thornton, Ontario, and are the parents of my very hard-working chief of staff, Drew Davidson. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'd like to be sure to introduce page captain Chandise Nelson's parents, Rose Nelson and father Chris Nelson. They are in the members' galleries this morning. I know them well; I am so happy to have them and welcome them to Queen's Park. Thank you.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Joining us in the west gallery today is a staff person in my constituency office, Andrew Green, and joining him are Naveed Tagari and Virginia Tucciarone. Welcome.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I believe you will find unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear purple ribbons in recognition of Epilepsy Action Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to wear purple ribbons for Epilepsy Action Day. Do we agree? Agreed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, this government's attack on doctors continued. The Minister of Health blamed so-called out-of-control billing by doctors as a reason for his mismanagement. He said doctors are overbilling hundreds of millions of dollars.

Is the minister insinuating that doctors are creating patient demand? Is it not true that doctors are billing for services they have delivered? If the minister's implying that doctors should deny service to patients to balance the budget, is that not rationing? If the minister wants to ration care and prevent patients from accessing care, then why does he just not do that and stop blaming the doctors?

Mr. Speaker, why is this government blaming doctors for their inability to manage the health care system?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is going to want to weigh in on this. I just want to say that we very much hope that the Ontario Medical Association—the OMA—will come back to the table. We want to have that conversation. This is a conversation about physician compensation. That's what it's about. I know that there are some who would like to make it about something else, but it is about physician compensation. It's entirely appropriate that the minister would talk about physician compensation, because that's what the discussion is about. We look forward to a productive discussion with the OMA.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Premier, we understand that managing costs is a challenge, but your minister needs to take some leadership, stop playing the blame game in the media and sit down with doctors and come to an agreement.

Back to the Premier, Mr. Speaker: The government has been trying to divide this profession. It's been two years since these doctors have had a contract and, in these two years, this government has unilaterally slashed doctors' fees to a tune of \$815 million. Because of this, clinics have closed, practices have shut down and doctors have left the province. This government is trying to divide and conquer, rather than sit down and negotiate.

Mr. Speaker, there are a handful of doctors sitting over there on the government side. Why are they letting their government slander doctors and cut services to patients?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, our position hasn't changed at all. What I did yesterday is I implored our doctors, through the representation to the OMA, to come back to negotiations with us, as I have done many, many times over the past one year—more than one year, Mr. Speaker. It's important that we get back to formal negotiations so we can work out an agreement which treats all physicians fairly.

What I was speaking of is how technological changes, for example, have resulted in procedures and services being done much faster, in a much more expeditious way than in the past. With cataract surgery, for example, it used to take more than an hour; now it takes less than 20 minutes.

We need to make sure that we're being fair to all physicians and that the compensation that we're providing to them reflects the work that they're doing and values that work. What happens is, if we've got certain high billers who are billing in advance of those technological adjustments being made, it's unfair to other doctors, like our family doctors, our pediatricians, psychiatrists or medical officers of health, who are working just as hard.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the Premier: The Minister of Health is in charge. If he thinks that doctors are defrauding the system, he has the power to fix that, not to attack them in the media.

Back to the Premier: When the Minister of Health and the government re-launched their attack on doctors yesterday, I found it pretty rich. This is the government that gave us Ornge; it gave us eHealth; it overspent on smart meters. It's a government that budgeted \$40 million to cancel a gas plant that ballooned to over a billion. This is a government that has run nine straight deficits. This is a government that launches baseless attacks to smear doctors. It's disrespectful, but this government just doesn't get it.

Will the government tell us what the billions of dollars squandered in scandal, waste and mismanagement could have done for our health care system?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister of Health.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As I mentioned, our position has not changed. We continue to implore the OMA to come back to the negotiating table. We need to, and we want to, work with them to get an agreement that is fair to all doctors and also helps us continue to provide the excellent care that our primary care physicians and our specialists across this province provide. It's important that they come back to the negotiating table and, to date, over the last year, they've refused to do so. I have

repeatedly asked them and my ministry has repeatedly asked them to come back to the negotiating table.

We believe that there's an agreement that can be found, an agreement that provides us with a sustainable, predictable increasing budget, year after year after year, for physician services, but we need the OMA at the negotiating table. I don't know if the member opposite is suggesting they shouldn't come back. We need them at the negotiating table so that we can reach agreement on a fair deal for all doctors.

1040

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. There was a time in Ontario when families looked forward to their golden years. They worked hard, they provided a better life for their kids than they had growing up, and they were looking forward to looking back on what they have. But today, that Ontario is very different for our seniors. They now worry about being able to pay their bills, the ones brought on by this government: skyrocketing hydro bills, doubling costs for medication, gasoline taxes, increased natural gas, and the list goes on and on, all because this Premier cannot control spending.

My question is, when will the Premier stop making seniors pay for her waste, mismanagement and scandal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's talk about—just in our most recent budget—what we have put in place to support seniors. We put in place an additional \$250 million to expand capacity to deliver high-quality home and community care, and an additional \$75 million over three years in community-based residential hospice and palliative care, for a total of about \$155 million. We're expanding access to a low-income seniors' benefit for 170,000 more seniors. That means that 170,000 more seniors will pay no deductible on their drug costs. We're making the shingles vaccine free for eligible seniors between the ages of 65 and 70. That saves \$170 each for each of those people. We're removing the debt retirement charge on electricity bills, which will save Ontarians and seniors—and an additional \$10 million annually in behavioural supports to help long-term-care home residents with dementia and other complex behaviours. We understand that serving seniors is our responsibility.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Premier: This government has made life more unaffordable for families, especially seniors. In my office last week, a large group of seniors gathered to talk about what life in Ontario has become under this Liberal government. Bonnie Beam was one of those seniors in my office. She told the media how she only turns her heat on in her bathroom because the hydro costs are "astronomical." She said she cannot turn the heat on in her bedrooms, and when the temperature falls below minus 30 degrees, she might turn a little heat on in the kitchen. This was a real story from a real person. All this is because the government has bungled the energy sector and sent her hydro bill soaring.

Does this government realize just how unaffordable they've made life for seniors?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just went over some of the things we have done in our budget to actually make life more affordable for seniors.

I hope that when the member opposite has constituents in his office, he's very clear about the programs that are in place to actually help people with their electricity bills. Whether it's the Ontario electricity support program or whether it's the particular program that is targeted at seniors and property tax credits—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I don't want to get to the point where—I would loathe to start your Easter break early. But I also would suggest to you that when questions are put and answers are put, neither side provoke each other while the answer is being given or the question is being put. The people on your own sides: Don't engage, please.

Please finish.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is the job of every MPP in this House to make sure that constituents have information. It is the job of government to make sure we put those supports in place. But it is the job of the MPP for Nipissing to make sure that people in his constituency have all the information that is going to help them—programs that our government put in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Premier—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No matter where he sits, I know where the member is from. Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, come to order.

Carry on.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: A large group of seniors gathered in my office last week. Their prime concern was rising drug costs. They're angry with the Liberals' decision to double drug costs for the vast majority of seniors. At the finance committee this week, Debra Cooper Burger, chair of an Ontario seniors' group, told this government that seniors will be forced to choose between food or buying their medication. That's the reality of what we have in Ontario. Our seniors rely on that medication to stay healthy and out of hospital. Our most vulnerable deserve better.

Will the Premier commit today to cancelling the planned increase to seniors' drug costs as outlined in the budget?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister responsible for seniors.

Hon. Mario Sergio: The Premier was quite right, telling the member to pass the information that's available to our seniors. It doesn't matter where they live, if they live in York West or if they live in the member's riding.

Some 173,000 low-income seniors don't pay anything for drugs anymore. There is a lot more, Mr. Speaker. In

order to help the seniors that live on a single pension—very low incomes—this budget is great for the seniors who can't afford to pay the \$70 hydro. We have eliminated that. For the low-income seniors who go to the hospital, we have reduced the parking fees by 50%. The \$30 emissions test: We have eliminated that. There's a \$170 savings for the shingles vaccine.

This is all to help our seniors who can't afford the high costs, if you will, Speaker. And when we say—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, I asked the Premier whether she had listened to the nearly 60 organizations, representing hundreds of thousands of Ontarians, who wrote to her and asked her “not to respond by merely slightly increasing the user threshold at which the higher deductible will be charged but to cancel the fee increase entirely and uphold the principle of universality.”

Will the Premier listen to them and cancel her plan?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I've been very clear that we're very pleased that 173,000 more seniors in Ontario are not going to have to pay any deductible going forward on their drug costs. We have said that we want people to give us feedback on the regulation that is out for consultation right now. We will be listening to that feedback very intently. I've said that if we didn't get that part of it right, then we will make a change.

I hope that the people that the leader of the third party is speaking to hear from her that they have the opportunity to give us that input right now, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, these organizations went on to say that “universality and equity principles were written into the Canada Health Act...”

These are the fundamental principles that ensure the health care services in this province and in this country serve everyone. So why is the Premier abandoning that principle, Speaker? Why is she abandoning a principle which is written right into the Canada Health Act and leaving most of Ontario's seniors paying more for prescription medication?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, that's just not the case. It's just not the case. As many times as the leader of the third party would like to say it, it is not the case.

The fact is that 173,000 more seniors in this province will pay nothing. They will have no costs associated with their drug care. I would have thought that that would be something the leader of the third party would support.

We've said, Mr. Speaker, on the other part of the initiative, that we will be seeking input. The regulation is out for consultation. The decisions have not been made. We're still listening to people's commentary, and we will be looking at the action going forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it's not just my opinion that this act in the budget that the Liberals put forward is eroding the principle of universality. Sixty organizations that range from health care advocates to seniors' advocates are the ones that are naming exactly that.

Yesterday, the Premier made it clear that, for her, this is about rhetoric and politics. It may be for her, but for New Democrats, it's not. It is about people. It's about making sure that our health care system is there for people—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Come to order, please.

Please finish, Leader.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —no matter who they are or what their income. It's about building and protecting a system where seniors can actually afford the prescription drugs that they need.

Will this Premier explain why she is more concerned with politics and deficit reduction than she is with the protection of universality of health care and ensuring that seniors can afford the prescriptions that they need?

1050

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The leader of the third party knows that the regulation is posted and we are consulting, including consulting with the organizations that she referenced.

Let's remind ourselves of their principles of universality, because they cut the number of drugs offered through the drug program of the province by 10% when they were in power—over 230 drugs. They closed 24% of acute care hospital beds in the province. They closed 13% of mental health beds in the province. They reduced hospital funding by 1% in their last year of office—that was, in fact, the second year of a budget which decreased health care funding for two years running. And they delisted home care from OHIP as well. That's their concept of universality.

Our concept is to defend this health care system, to defend the Canada Health Act. We have a Premier who believes in universality and believes in defending that act, and I'm working with her to make sure we support it.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday, the Premier accused people—sorry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is my next question to the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier accused people who are worried about the cost of medication for seniors as setting “a fire where there isn't one.”

Earlier this month, I met a senior named Grace who lives in Toronto in community housing and who earns

about \$25,000 a year. She was already worried about how much she'd have to pay for her hydro bill, and now she's worried about how much she's going to have to pay for her prescriptions.

Speaker, as I said before, it's not rhetoric. It's about real people, and that's what this government has to get their heads around. Does this Premier really believe that this issue is no big deal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I hope the leader of the third party, when she engages seniors about this, that she does—in fact, I'm happy to share this chart with her that demonstrates that Ontario by far across this country has the most generous drug program for our seniors, more than the NDP province. In Ontario, the average cost is \$277, the out-of-pocket cost for a senior in this province. If we look at Alberta, the average cost is \$613. If we look at BC, it's \$615. It's \$982 in Manitoba, the average out-of-pocket cost for seniors.

We have by far the most generous drug program for seniors. I'm happy to provide her with this information so that when she does consult with those seniors, she's completely transparent and holistic in her approach, that she shows them just how generous we are being.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The fact is that universal health care is a principle that has been upheld by governments of every political stripe. In that way, it's a bit like the ability to build infrastructure at the same time as running a public hydro system. All parties have been able to do that, except perhaps now.

But here in Ontario, we have a Premier who's undermining the fundamental principle of universality. Will this Premier do what leaders from every political party before her have done and actually stand up for the principles of universal health care?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I hope by now the leader of the third party understands how much this Premier and how much myself as the Minister of Health believe in and are defending the principles of universality when it comes to our health care system.

Let me give another example of what we've done for our seniors. I've had many seniors come to me and complain that they get a prescription for a chronic medication. They might have been on it for years—for high blood pressure, perhaps. Speaker, they take that three-month prescription to their pharmacist but they only get a month's supply back. Part of the reason is, we've incentivized our pharmacists up till now that they get paid—in fact, the senior pays that co-payment—every single time. Our pharmacists no longer do that. It's a maximum of five times a year. You take that three-month prescription to your pharmacist, you're going to get three months' worth of drugs. You're saving tens, if not hundreds, of dollars—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I hope by now that the Liberals understand how their budget bungle actually abandons the principle of universal health care. That's what everybody is telling them, Speaker. They need to admit it if they're going to make a change.

Anyone in Ontario, in fact, who wants to tell the Premier what they think of her plan to double the cost of medication for seniors can actually call her right now. They can call her at 416-325-2228. That number again, just to be sure the Minister of Health heard it—because he's asking whether we're telling people to get engaged in the process, and we are. Call the Premier at 416-325-2228, because apparently it isn't enough that the Ontario Health Coalition, local chapters of CARP, the Council of Canadians, the National Pensioners Federation, the Raging Grannies, the Alliance of Seniors, major newspapers and worried seniors from across Ontario have already weighed in.

The Premier said yesterday that she's listening to the people. The question is, how much more does she need to hear?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Since we seem to be in this position of exchanging information, I'll reciprocate. As I mentioned, I'm happy to provide this chart which is very illustrative of comparisons across the country, demonstrating that we have by far the most generous drug program for seniors. No other province even comes close. For the next one, the out-of-pocket costs are twice that.

I'm happy to sit down and have a discussion about the Canada Health Act. They know—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We also have Liberals who don't know what "universality" means.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We know what "universality" means; you don't, because you delisted home care and took it out of OHIP.

Mr. Speaker, we've got the regulation posted. We're committed to taking 173,000 so they no longer pay any annual deductible; they'll join about 300,000. So about a quarter of all seniors will pay no annual deductible whatsoever. That's even more generous for a program that is the most generous in Canada.

DANGEROUS OFFENDERS

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. The minister, along with the Attorney General, met with me last month to discuss the failings of the justice system and what we can do to correct them. One thing that came as a shock to all of us, as I'm sure it will be to every member in this House, is that there is no electronic monitoring in Ontario to ensure that dangerous offenders, upon their release, are tracked by the authorities. In Ontario, the best protection we can offer is a piece of paper.

Why has this government continued to leave victims living in fear by not investing in simple, affordable, electronic monitoring technology for our most dangerous and violent offenders returning to our communities?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member opposite, first of all, for taking the time to meet with the

Attorney General and me. We had a very constructive meeting. It was a very detailed meeting, going through how the system works when it comes to inmates who have been returned to the community and things that we need to do.

Speaker, as I have been working along with the member opposite, I assure him that we have embarked on very significant work around transforming our correctional services, both in terms of our institutions and the services that are provided in the community as well. As a result, in order to learn even more, I have been travelling and meeting with probation and parole officers to better understand the services provided. I would love to share more details in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Again to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services: I've sent a letter to the minister further expressing my concerns about our province's inability to track our most dangerous and violent offenders. Electronic monitoring isn't expensive, it isn't new, and it's being used in many places such as Calgary, Edmonton, PEI, and even by Canadian border services. There are numerous options providing cost-effective, proven results with this technology. One of these companies already does all the monitoring for the country right here in Ontario, in Sudbury.

Speaker, will the minister commit to this House today to bring a pilot project forward to equip our police and corrections officers with electronic tracking devices so they can monitor dangerous and violent offenders upon their release into our communities?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, I thank the member. He gave me a letter just a few days ago, and I spoke to him in person and undertook to look into it, and to have a subsequent meeting, as well.

1100

I also want to make sure that I make it very clear that the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services have policies and procedures in place for the supervision of sexual and other high-risk offenders. Probation and parole officers receive specialized training to aid in risk assessment, supervision and monitoring. Where an offender has a court order requiring treatment or intervention, or chooses to participate in treatment, probation officers work with the offender to access the appropriate programming. Information-sharing protocols with local police are also in place. Police also have policies and procedures in place for monitoring high-risk offenders in their jurisdictions.

We need to continue to work on these issues. We need to make sure that victims are always safe in the community and that we do provide appropriate rehabilitation services to offenders. I look forward to working with the member opposite in working those strategies.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, can the Premier explain why the sunshine list will have a huge hole in it this year where Hydro One used to be?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I am pleased to say that the salaries of the executives of Hydro One will be posted continuously in the public record for all to see at any time of the year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: An entertaining finance minister. The Premier—this question is back to her—was elected on a platform that read, “The kind of abuses uncovered at Hydro One must never be repeated. We will ... insist that they disclose significant expense claims by board members and executives.”

That was that 2003 Liberal platform, page 9. Just because Hydro One is no longer public, the salaries for all the top executives still come from the same place as they did in 2003: you and me and every other ratepayer in Ontario. The only difference is that now Hydro One executives won't appear on the sunshine list, making it far more difficult to uncover any abuses.

Again, can the Premier explain why Hydro One is not on the sunshine list?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let me be clear: It's a publicly traded company. They have different oversight mechanisms. It's required for the members and the executives to be displayed. That would be available on public record at any time. The disclosure is there to be seen at any time of the year.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Providing excellent community health care is an extremely important matter for constituents in Beaches–East York, and indeed for all Ontarians. It was a pillar I ran on in 2014.

Yesterday the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care outlined the progress that our government has made on our Patients First Action Plan for Health Care. Those achievements include reducing the cost of parking at Ontario hospitals for patients and their families and loved ones. They include \$1 billion in new health care spending this year, which will help improve access and include more than \$245 million in new funding for our hospitals. It also includes appointing Ontario's first-ever patient ombudsman.

But Speaker, the minister also reiterated his request that the Ontario Medical Association return to the table and work with our government to negotiate a new deal. Will the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care please tell this House why he is asking the OMA to come back to the negotiating table to help us improve our system—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It is immensely important to me as the Minister of Health that we resume negotiations and find that negotiated agreement together with the OMA, so we can continue to build upon the success that, quite frankly, our doctors are so proud of, as they should be: The success that they've been part of in making sure that

they're providing the best quality of care for their patients but also the fact now that 94% of Ontarians have access to a primary care provider. We couldn't have done that without the help and the hard work of our doctors and others in the front lines.

But, Mr. Speaker, our position has never changed. After a year of negotiations, when the OMA walked away from the agreement that it was advised that they accept from the facilitator, we want to continue to work with them. We want to come back to formal negotiations. I've implored them to do that repeatedly. I ask them to come back to the table now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I thank the minister for that response. Indeed, I would congratulate the minister and his entire ministry for the great work that they are doing transforming health care in the province of Ontario.

I know my constituents deeply appreciate the care and the support that Ontario doctors provide on a day-to-day basis. For most Ontarians, family doctors are who we immediately turn to when we are concerned about our health or find ourselves sick. They're the ones we turn to first.

Yesterday, I saw a press release from the OMA that seemed to call into question—and I think most Ontarians would agree—whether they are prepared to come back to the negotiating table and work with our government to negotiate a long-term deal that would provide stability for Ontario's doctors and patients, and improve conditions for Ontario's family doctors.

Will the minister please clarify for the House what the government's position is on returning to the negotiating table so we can reach a deal for fairly compensating Ontario doctors?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, while I continue to implore the OMA to come back to negotiations, we continue to increase our health care budget. It went up this year by over \$125 million. It will continue to increase each and every year.

But right now, because most doctors in the province bill for every service they provide, they effectively set their own salary. Over the past three years, this has resulted in an over-budget, above and beyond what we've budgeted in the ministry, of hundreds of millions of dollars. A large part of this overspend has come from high-billing specialists, who continue to be able to bill high amounts despite technological changes. I gave the example of cataract surgery that used to take over an hour and now takes less than 20 minutes.

These high-billing specialists often earn two, three or even more times as much as an average doctor or a family doctor might earn. It leaves less money for our family doctors, less for our pediatricians, our psychiatrists, our community health centre doctors, and it squeezes our ability to invest in other areas.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Premier. Premier, we warned the government repeatedly that it

was a bad idea to authorize the construction of wind turbines in the Great Lakes. They went ahead and signed contracts anyway, specifically with WindStream. When they got flooded with opposition, no pun intended, and in order to save Liberal seats, they abruptly reversed their position and said there would be no wind turbines in the Great Lakes. As a result, WindStream is suing, and taxpayers could be on the hook for \$568 million.

I would ask the Premier: If WindStream is successful in their suit, will the Liberal Party of Ontario reimburse the taxpayer for their incompetence and for once again showing that your government can't get anything right?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm not going to pre-empt a legal process. Obviously, I don't have knowledge of what those decisions will be. What we know is that we need to make decisions that are based on science, that are based on evidence. There was a concern about the impact of offshore turbines.

But let me say that the fact is that Ontario has taken the largest step in North America in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by shutting down coal-fired plants, by investing in renewables, by jump-starting an industry. That means we are taking a leadership role not just in this country, but internationally. We're going to continue to take that role, and that will include the implementation of our cap-and-trade system.

Part of the work that we've been doing is about renewables, and we're very proud of that work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the Premier: Taxpayers always pay for your incompetence.

The Premier would know that the star witness supporting WindStream's case is none other than her former colleague Mr. George Smitherman, the architect of the disastrous feed-in tariff program. While the government states in its defence that it was not prepared from a regulatory perspective to deal with offshore energy developments, Mr. Smitherman testified that when he was minister, no one discussed with him that they were unable to accommodate offshore wind developments. In fact, he stated that the Ministers of the Environment and Natural Resources expressed strong support for the program.

Speaker, I would ask the Premier: If she is not going to reimburse the taxpayers should the WindStream case be successful, perhaps she can sit down with her ex-colleague and find out why George Smitherman is testifying against his former government?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Two major points here: one, this is a legal case. The member may be new to the House, but he knows neither the government nor he should comment—

Interjections.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I know you didn't.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: He knows that none of us should be commenting on a legal case on this side or the other side of the House. Second—

Mr. Bill Walker: You won't be able to talk about anything pretty soon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, second time.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Second, the question is entirely hypothetical. The third piece: Can the member point to any large inland body of fresh water that had wind turbines on it prior to those decisions? No, they can't. There was prudence taken by this government to make sure that there was good science in place before they were deployed. That's the sensible thing to do.

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Minister of Education. Yesterday I met Scott Myers at a Sagonaska parent council meeting in Belleville. Scott is a single father from Petawawa who is trying desperately to enrol his daughter Jayna in this specialized school. His family worked on her application for over a year. Scott and I sat patiently as we heard testimonials from graduates, current students and their families about how Sagonaska dramatically improved their reading and writing and boosted their confidence. But the minister's decision to freeze enrolment next year is creating chaos for families like Scott's, who now face an uncertain future. For students like Jayna, it means that this Liberal government is pulling the rug out from under them and they will not be given the same opportunities to succeed.

My question is simple: Will the Minister of Education open enrolment and give students like Jayna the school year they deserve?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I want to assure everyone that we are committed to the success of all of our students. That includes students who have severe learning disabilities and, in this particular case, students who are struggling to learn to read.

We agree with the parents and with the students whom I talked to privately last evening that these programs at the four demonstration schools have made a tremendous impact on their life. In fact, children who have been struggling their whole life to learn to read have been successful in learning to read through these programs. There's no dispute about that. The challenge for all of us now is to figure out how we can support more students with similar needs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Yesterday, the minister said that she is accountable for the actions of her department, so will she please act on her claim and answer a direct question?

Back to the minister: The families gathered in Belleville last night witnessed how out of touch this Liberal government is with the realities of students with exceptional needs. The minister asked what went wrong with students at their home school boards. If the minister was listening, she would know that it's not about what went wrong at district school boards but what is right about provincial and demonstration schools.

Despite the proven track record of schools like Sagonaska, the minister has capped enrolment and frozen applications for next year. Yesterday, the minister didn't answer a single question from parents or students. Will she please answer one now? Is the closure of Sagonaska or any provincial or demonstration school a potential outcome of this year's consultations?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I beg to differ with the member opposite. When I talk to a student and their parents and they tell me that a student with a severe learning disability who has an average or above-average intelligence is in grade 8 or 9 and reading at a kindergarten or grade 1 level, something went wrong. Part of my job, through this consultation, is to figure out what went wrong. We know that there are thousands of students all over the province for whom the services that we already have in place didn't click. We need to figure out what went wrong so that we can put in place services that do click and so that students do learn to read when they have the capacity to do so. That's my job.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. When it comes to how we shape our communities and how we work to create better access to affordable housing for Ontarians who need it most, I've always believed in giving municipalities the tools they need to make important decisions at the local level.

One of these powerful tools is inclusionary zoning. As members of this House are aware, I've advocated for inclusionary zoning in my own private member's bill.

In many communities, increasing house prices and rent costs are making it difficult for people to find housing they can afford. At last week's new Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy announcement, our government took action to achieve a fairer society. It was announced that we intend to introduce legislation that would, if passed, make inclusionary zoning a reality in communities across this province.

Mr. Speaker, through you, will the minister tell us about the thinking behind this decision and the next steps ahead?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, as well as the member from Parkdale-High Park, who have been tireless in their efforts to advocate for inclusionary zoning.

At the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, we don't have a construction office down at the end of our wing, filled with bricklayers and carpenters and electricians and plumbers who wait for a call from Schreiber or Peterborough or Hamilton to come and build eight, 18 or 100 units. It doesn't work that way. It works by partnering together with our municipalities and the private sector—

Interjection: Not-for-profits.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: —and not-for-profits, to try to encourage, incent and plan for the provision of social and affordable housing.

I've come to believe, thanks to some of the advocacy efforts of other members in the House, that inclusionary zoning is a good way to go. We're meeting with our partners. We're going to come up with something very comprehensive, and it's going to work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I want to congratulate the minister on his tremendous leadership.

I'm also very proud of the action our government has taken in the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy to make finding a home easier for low- and middle-income Ontarians and to empower municipalities to address their communities' needs.

Some people see inclusionary zoning as a magic wand, thinking it will be sufficient on its own to solve housing challenges. I'd like to urge the government to pass existing legislation as urgently as possible.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister explain why simply passing one of the existing private members' bills on inclusionary zoning that are already before the House wouldn't achieve these larger objectives for affordable housing?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Well, inclusionary zoning has, in some jurisdictions, proven to be an effective tool if it's done right. We want to make sure we get it right.

I recognize and our government recognizes that it's now time to take action beyond section 37, which could have done a lot of this kind of thing if properly applied, but it wasn't. That's why we're developing a broader set of legislative changes that will go beyond inclusionary zoning.

That's why we want to talk to our partners, because, believe it or not, the development industry and our municipalities and some of my colleagues in this House have got some great ideas that need to be rolled into that legislation. We're going to make sure that happens because we're going to make sure we get it right.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, I've written to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing about the challenges some of my constituents are facing in land-lease communities where they live in Wasaga Beach. I've also questioned the minister in this House.

These developments are managed by Parkbridge's Adult Lifestyle Communities. Three of these communities are petitioning the province to update the Residential Tenancies Act, 1991, to bring in better oversight and transparency of the fees they pay.

Right now, residents in these communities have no protection and many, including Mr. Bill Dee, say the annual land-lease increases they face are too high. Another resident, Mr. Tony Brady, told local media, "They can raise it to whatever they want. This year, it's 4.2%; it could be 6.2%, or 10.2%, and we have nowhere to turn, we have absolutely no recourse."

My constituents need the government to come up with a creative solution. Will the Premier please commit to tackling this issue?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: The Premier will commit to tackling this issue, I can assure you. I appreciated getting a copy of the letter from the honourable member opposite.

There are situations where this is a serious problem. We need to have serious people sit down and look for some serious solutions. I can commit to the honourable member that we're doing exactly that, and I hope that in the not-too-distant future, we can together come up with a solution that will work for your constituents and others who are in these situations.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I certainly appreciate that answer from the minister. The residents are particularly concerned about transparency. They see steady increases in maintenance fees, for example, and the company unwilling to give them explanations. If they bought new lawn mowers or something like that, they'd understand the fees going up, but they never seem to get an explanation.

There are about 40 of these land-lease communities, I believe, across the province, so a lot of us are affected by it. I'd just ask the honourable minister, do you have a time frame in mind of when we might come to a solution?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If it's anything like inclusionary zoning, it will be a long time.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: And if municipalities used section 37, we could have had this solved a long time ago too.

I don't have a timeline. I can assure the member opposite that we're looking at it. We're looking at it seriously. We do think it's something that needs to be addressed. There are different ways to address it. You may know that the Landlord and Tenant Board and how that operates is in fact a function of the Attorney General, so we're working inter-ministerially to look at the potential answers.

To the honourable member: I'll get back to you—hopefully, as we quick as we can—with some action.

CROWN ATTORNEYS

Ms. Sarah Campbell: To the Premier: Speaker, as this Liberal government is aware, the residing Rainy River district crown attorney is retiring. Rather than immediately undertake a search for a replacement, the Ministry of the Attorney General has decided to hire a rent-a-crown from a neighbouring district hundreds of kilometres away, despite the fact that the statistics show that the Rainy River district crown attorney has the highest caseload per capita in northern Ontario.

My question is simple: Can the Premier tell us when there will be a permanent resident crown attorney for the Rainy River district?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I don't have the time frame on that. I'm going to ask the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to look at that.

But what I can say is that it would obviously be very critical that services would be in place, that there would be access to those services at any time, given the severity of cases. So the fact that there hasn't been a permanent appointment does not mean that the services would not be available to the member's residents.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: All Ontarians deserve fair and equitable access to justice as a basic right. This latest blow to access to justice in the Rainy River district comes on the heels of a decision to not replace the resident judge, and serves as a further erosion of services and a further marginalization of the area.

A resident crown attorney has the knowledge of the area, including the knowledge and sensitivity to First Nation issues, as identified by the Gladue principle, and, just as importantly, is available and accessible.

No community should have to settle for whistle-stop justice. Will the Premier commit today to hiring a permanent replacement for the crown attorney who resides in the Rainy River district, without delay?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member opposite for asking the question. I appreciate very much the Premier's responses. Of course, we take access to justice very, very seriously. A fundamental tenet of our judicial system is to make sure that all citizens have timely access to justice.

I'm confident that the Ministry of the Attorney General is doing everything in its power to make sure that the services that are needed in all communities across the province, especially northern Ontario, are available in a timely manner. I know there has been a significant effort that has been put in place to ensure that we continue to modernize our justice system, to better utilize technology in the delivery of the justice system, and of course, to ensure that services are also being provided in the French language, which is also an essential aspect of access to justice.

NORTHERN ONTARIO HERITAGE FUND

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. We are greatly involved in supporting communities and businesses in northern Ontario, recognizing that through strategic investment, northern Ontario is on the right track to prosperity.

Investing in the north is a critical part of our plan to build Ontario up by supporting the construction of modern infrastructure and creating a dynamic and innovative business climate.

I understand that one of the ways that our government contributes to northern communities is through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund. Mr. Speaker, could the minister please tell us more about this fund and the support that it is providing to people in the north?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much to the member for Kitchener Centre for this question. Through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund program, our government is investing \$100 million each year in this economic development fund that supports new projects across the north that are certainly strengthening northern communities, creating jobs and helping more northerners live, work and build careers in this great part of the province.

I wish I could go into all aspects of the fund, but I am proud to say that it was a Liberal government, under René Fontaine, that first introduced the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. back in the late 1980s. It's our government that increased the NOHFC funding to an unprecedented \$100-million level, a program that has created or retained over 25,000 jobs, that has actually brought forward investment—tripled in terms of the amount.

We're very excited, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to talking about one of the announcements we made recently. Perhaps I'll be able to get to that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I want to thank the minister for his answer. Clearly he is a very strong advocate for the north through the work of the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund. It's great to hear that our government is making such important investments in northern Ontario, and that we're exploring innovative ways to help Ontarians who are living, working and studying in the north.

I hear that the minister was recently at Lakehead University to announce that they are making several investments through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund. Mr. Speaker, could the minister please tell us more about these investments at Lakehead University?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I was indeed at Lakehead University with my colleague the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry to make a great announcement. The university was here yesterday, actually, with us all, and they continue to be a beacon of education in the north.

What we were able to provide was an \$814,000 Northern Ontario Heritage Fund investment to establish a five-year industrial research chair position in green chemicals and processes. Additionally, through another investment of \$470,000, we invested towards the development of a fire-resistance testing laboratory at Lakehead University, of great interest to my colleagues.

Certainly, we are very proud to support cutting-edge research conducted at Lakehead University and all across the north. By supporting that development and commercialization of new technologies, we're contributing to future prosperity in northern Ontario.

ORGANIZED CRIME

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Premier: We debate a private member's bill today. Ontario's black market, illegal trade and trafficking continue to grow in scope and sophistication. Ontario, as we know, is a major hub of human trafficking for sexual exploitation. Cocaine, amphetamines, heroin and other narcotics like fentanyl have long financed organized crime. Cash is king. We now see money laundering through online gambling, e-commerce and bitcoin. Contraband tobacco tax losses are at between 30% and 40%. Illegal weapons pervade.

Premier, as you would know, much of this crime is organized. My question: Do you feel that we as a society are suitably up to date and organized to fight back?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. It is certainly something that this side of the House also recognizes as important. It is why we have already taken action on a number of items that he seeks in his bill, and we're seeking to address them positively.

It is why we're working very closely with First Nations communities, in a balanced and respectful approach, to try to find compliance measures to the issues that we face. We have taken action in the 2016 budget and in the 2015 fall economic statement. We have four pilots already in regard to raw leaf, labelling and compliance, including an OPP detachment for fine enforcement. And Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the underground economy, over \$930 million has now been retrieved last year as a result of the measures that we're taking. So we will continue.

When it comes to community safety and human trafficking, I will defer to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you for that. I'll point out that Ontario does not have a strategy for human trafficking, and, as with tobacco, drugs and illegal weapons, there's a lack of tracking data. There's a lack of statistics. I agree: We do have task forces and ad hoc initiatives, and this is good. However, we're told there's a lack of information-sharing and a lack of collaboration among those who are fighting the criminal underworld. Again, organization is lacking.

My question: Would you support the establishment of a one-year, time-limited commission of inquiry—not an inquisition; nothing like that, but a research-based inquiry, drawing on facts and expert testimony to assemble the necessary knowledge, the understanding and best practices to provide further advice and recommendations to this government with respect to future action?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I was going to focus on the issue around human trafficking that the member raised in his question, which I think we all recognize in this House and in our society is a deplorable activity, and we have to do everything in our power to stop it.

Just yesterday, the minister responsible for women's issues and I attended a national anti-trafficking forum that is taking place in Toronto. It's being hosted by the Canadian Women's Foundation and Public Safety Canada. They have brought in stakeholders, survivor groups and police services to come together to look at the best possible strategies to combat human trafficking. In fact, Speaker, as we speak, my ministry and the Ontario Women's Directorate are hosting a working lunch, sharing with them what we have learned in our consultations as we develop the strategy to combat and end human trafficking in the province of Ontario.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, as you know, I've been across my riding from Fort Erie to Niagara Falls and into Niagara-on-the-Lake, and the message is the same: Seniors are worried about your Liberal government's plan to increase the cost of their prescription drugs. It's unacceptable that they already struggle to pay their hydro and their food bills. They simply can't afford increased prescription drug costs.

But don't take it from me, Minister; take it from the more than 60 seniors' organizations that have raised this issue with myself and you. Will your government reverse this decision and tell the seniors in Niagara that they don't have to worry about higher co-payments and increased annual deductibles when it comes to their medications?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As always, I appreciate the question from the member.

As I said earlier, the intent—I don't think I said this portion of it. The intent of this action in the budget was to take 173,000 of the poorest seniors in this province and move them from a category where they currently pay \$100 per year as an annual deductible towards their drug costs into a category where they will go from a \$100 deductible to zero dollars deductible. They'll join a category, which already exists, of about 300,000 individuals who pay no annual deductible.

That was the intent of putting this in the budget, and I would think—I expect—that the member opposite supports and would even perhaps applaud that move to provide better access for those individuals.

We've indicated that we want to make sure we get this right for all seniors. We posted the regulation. We're engaged in consultation, including, I'm sure, with many of the groups that he has referenced.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Here's the problem with the 170,000. It's good that we're heading that way, but here's the reality, Minister: One million seniors will have to pay more, and that's a fact. So let's be clear about that. That's the issue.

This budget is going to nearly double the annual deductible for seniors' prescriptions and cause higher co-

payments every time they fill prescriptions at their pharmacy. I know this. The members of this Legislature know this and the seniors in my riding know this.

Seniors made their communities great and they deserve better. Will you give the seniors in my riding and across Ontario an answer about your plan? Will this government reverse its decision and move towards universal coverage for all our seniors' prescription medication for the one million people who will have to pay?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm happy to continue the consultation, including with seniors' groups.

FLOODING

Mr. Yvan Baker: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Rising temperatures and April showers bring spring flowers, but rising temperatures and heavy rains also bring spring flooding.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, along with conservation authorities like the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority in my riding of Etobicoke Centre, monitor surface water levels, weather forecasts and watershed conditions at locations across the watershed. These measurements, weather forecasts and radar information on temperature and rainfall predictions along with historical data are compiled to develop a flood forecast. In 2013, flooding hit our province and hit our community in Etobicoke Centre very, very hard, so I know my constituents are keenly aware of the importance of this type of service and these types of forecasts.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can the minister please explain to the House what his ministry is doing to ensure that communities in Ontario are prepared to respond to potential flooding emergencies?

Hon. Bill Mauro: The ministry monitors watershed conditions 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and is able to contact stakeholders immediately with updates. We work with communities, conservation authorities and Environment Canada to forecast where and when flooding is likely to occur. Together with the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, we work to ensure that Ontarians are prepared for floods.

MNR has an information website to inform the people of Ontario about potential flooding, provide real-time information about weather and flooding risks, and provide tips on what to do in the event of a flood.

In areas where there is no conservation authority, MNR district offices are responsible for providing local flood messaging to municipalities and First Nations. Our Surface Water Monitoring Centre performs a daily assessment for flood hazard potential, and this assessment considers many dimensions such as weather, water levels, and snow pack.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Ottawa–Orléans on a point of order.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to introduce a few special guests who are here today: Dr. Jean Augustine, former MP for Etobicoke–Lakeshore, is here today; Nancy Coldham, co-chair of Equal Voice Toronto; Thelma McGillivray, vice-president of the Provincial Council of Women Ontario; Maide and Hatice Yazar from the Business and Professional Women's Clubs of Ontario; and Joan Bismillah, a champion of human rights in South Africa and member of Equal Voice Toronto, joining us today for my motion debate this afternoon.

Finally, it is a distinct pleasure to introduce Mr. Lloyd Luckock and his wife, Alice. Lloyd is the grandson of Rae Luckock. Rae was one of the first female MPPs elected to this chamber. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore on a point of order.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The MPP beat me to it. My former MP Jean Augustine is here, and also a wonderful student intern from Ryerson University who worked in my constituency office, Eric Muetz.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): York South–Weston.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: It's really not a point of order. I would just like to wish happy birthday to my seatmate, who will be turning 29 on March 26.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're right: It's not a point of order. I'm going to have it stricken from the record.

The Associate Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I have a point of order: I would also like to join my colleague in recognizing the presence of the Honourable Jean Augustine, who was the first black woman elected as a member of Parliament. We're so honoured that you're here.

Also, I notice my friend Nancy Coldham is here as well, and I would like to welcome her.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Not to be outdone, the member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Speaker, I'm really afraid to say that this is not a point of order, but if I may beg your indulgence for a moment, I would like to wish my seatmate from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell in front of me whose birthday will be on April 2 next week—we won't be here, but I'd still like to wish him a happy birthday.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Speaker, I hope you'll entertain some generosity towards me as well with another birthday wish to my seatmate, our colleague Kathryn McGarry from Cambridge. The member from Cambridge has a big birthday coming up, and we just want to wish her all happiness and best wishes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Happy birthday to me, happy birthday to me.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This feels much better, actually, so I don't mind doing this.

DEFERRED VOTES

SUPPLY ACT, 2016
LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2016

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 166, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016 / Projet de loi 166, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2016.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1141 to 1146.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members, please take your seats.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That was a protest. On March 23, 2016, Mr. Gravelle moved second reading of Bill 166.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Anderson, Granville	Gravelle, Michael	Moridi, Reza
Baker, Yvan	Hoggarth, Ann	Murray, Glen R.
Ballard, Chris	Hoskins, Eric	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hunter, Mitzie	Naqvi, Yasir
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Oraziotti, David
Chan, Michael	Kiwala, Sophie	Potts, Arthur
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Marie-France	Qaadri, Shafiq
Coteau, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Crack, Grant	MacCharles, Tracy	Sandals, Liz
Damerla, Dipika	Malhi, Harinder	Sergio, Mario
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	Martins, Cristina	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Vernile, Daiene
Dickson, Joe	Mauro, Bill	Wong, Soo
Dong, Han	McGarry, Kathryn	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	McMahon, Eleanor	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMeekin, Ted	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Nicholls, Rick
Bailey, Robert	Hatfield, Percy	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Hillier, Randy	Scott, Laurie
Campbell, Sarah	Horwath, Andrea	Tabuns, Peter
Clark, Steve	Kudak, Tim	Taylor, Monique
Coe, Lorne	Jones, Sylvia	Thompson, Lisa M.
DiNovo, Cheri	MacLaren, Jack	Vanthof, John
Fedeli, Victor	Mantha, Michael	Walker, Bill
Forster, Cindy	Martow, Gila	Wilson, Jim
Gates, Wayne	McDonnell, Jim	Yakabuski, John
Gélinas, France	Miller, Norm	Yurek, Jeff
Gretzky, Lisa	Natyshak, Taras	

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 52; the nays are 35.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

SUPPLY ACT, 2016

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2016

Mr. Naqvi, on behalf of Ms. Matthews, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 166, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016 / Projet de loi 166, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2016.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Naqvi has moved third reading of Bill 166. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell—

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote? Same vote.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 52; the nays are 35.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes.

I would like to make a quick comment to each and every one of you that you have a safe and happy Easter and spend some time with your families. Thank you very much.

This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1151 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great honour to introduce a number of guests who here today to celebrate someone's special birthday. Suzanne Mason is turning 80, and she and her friends are here to have lunch at Queen's Park: Catherine Copeland, Elizabeth Fedorkow, John and Peggy Barnard, Kathryn Kowal and David Alles. Welcome to Queen's Park, and happy birthday, Suzanne.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: On behalf of the PC Party, I'd like to introduce Paul Raymond and Sean O'Malley, here from Epilepsy Ontario.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made in the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' business such that Mr. Hatfield assumes ballot item number 29 and Mr. Natyshak assumes ballot item number 71.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PURIM

Mrs. Gila Martow: Just this week, we saw people down here at Queen's Park celebrating Nowruz, the holiday which means "new day" and commemorates the Persian new year. Well, we've got another Persian holiday, and it's the Jewish holiday of Purim. It's considered one of the most joyous days in the Hebrew calendar. It celebrates the survival of the Jewish people against an anti-Semitic villain once again. This time his name was Haman.

In the year 369 BCE, King Ahasuerus of Persia ascended the throne in what is now Iran. The villain of the story, Haman, was the arrogant, egotistical advisor to the king. Haman hated a Jew named Mordechai who refused to bow down to him, so Haman plotted to destroy the Jewish people. The king gave the fate of the Jewish people to Haman to do with as he pleased, so Haman planned just to exterminate all the Jews. The word "Purim" means "lots," and refers to a lottery system that Haman used to choose the date for the massacre.

The story of Purim is told in the biblical book of Esther. The heroes of the story are Esther, a young beautiful Jewish woman living in Persia, and her cousin Mordechai. Basically, Esther was taken into the harem and the king chose her to be his queen. She managed to convince the king not to exterminate the Jews, so instead he decided to exterminate Haman and his family.

Of course, now we eat cookies in the shape of Haman's hats. It's called hamantaschen—a triangular shape. One of the mitzvahs—the good deeds—is to get drunk to the point that you can't tell the difference between Mordechai and Haman. Now, some people interpret that to mean drunk on happiness, but many do not. So everybody stay safe. Don't drink and drive tonight, and remember, the RIDE checks are out there around the synagogues, believe it or not. So be careful, be safe, and happy Easter to everybody else this weekend.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. You learn something new every day.

SEARCH-AND-RESCUE HELICOPTER

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm proud to say that after \$30 in fees and months of waiting, I finally received the report that is supposed to tell me why the OPP helicopter has been moved from Sudbury airport to Orillia. Well, the only thing in that 30-page report that talks about this—listen to this, Speaker—is it's because there are more people in southern Ontario than in northern Ontario and therefore all of the resources should be in southern Ontario. According to them, we should not have a university or a hospital or a cancer treatment centre because—you know what?—there are less people in northern Ontario than in southern Ontario. This is the only rationale that they could put forward.

A lot of people have said that moving both helicopters to Orillia is dangerous because of the bad weather effect. Well, they actually, in the report, looked at the weather stations at Borden and Muskoka. Both of them are more than 40 kilometres away, as opposed to the Orillia base, which is right beside the lake, gets lake effect, is in a snowbelt and is often grounded.

People of the north are not taking this. I have been copied on resolutions from Charlton and Dack, the Manitoulin Municipal Association, the city of Greater Sudbury, the town of Hornepayne, la ville de Mattice-Val Côté and the township of Billings. They're all telling the minister the same thing: Bring the helicopter back to Sudbury Airport to protect the lives of northerners.

TRILLIUM HEALTH PARTNERS

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: In November 2011, the Credit Valley Hospital, the Mississauga Hospital and the Queensway Health Centre came together to form a new entity known as Trillium Health Partners. Four years in, the merger is delivering positive results for patients. Through partnership, working in a coordinated way across the system has helped to meet the needs of the patients and provide outstanding, sustainable, quality patient care. Each location focuses on the patient care they specialize in.

Trillium Health Partners is now managed by one management team ably led by the presidency of Michelle DiEmanuele, and is fully committed to improving patient care and delivering cost-effective solutions. Some of the key benefits of this merger have been: The centralized registration centre has made registration faster and easier for patients. There has been a 28% improvement in emergency department wait times for admitted patients as a result of managing patient flow across the hospital as opposed to within individual sites. This is also helping patients who urgently need beds to get them quicker. There has been a 20% decrease in wait times for cancer, cataract, hip and knee surgeries, as well as for CT and MRI scans.

As a merged hospital, Trillium Health Partners has turned out to be one of the most efficiently run hospitals in the province. This model has proved to be very effective in Mississauga and maybe needs to be explored in other regions of the province.

EPILEPSY

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I stand in the House today to welcome Epilepsy Ontario and to announce Purple Day. Today, MPPs are wearing purple ribbons to promote epilepsy awareness in honour of Purple Day, which falls on March 26. Founded in 2008, Purple Day was created to get people talking about the disorder and to help fight the stigma attached to seizure disorders by educating the public and empowering the epilepsy community.

Epilepsy Ontario is the voice of epilepsy across the province. Since 1956, the organization has been raising

public awareness and improving education across the province through publications, conferences, outreach initiatives and, of course, its website. Thank you to Epilepsy Ontario for the great work that you do across the province to improve the lives of people living with epilepsy.

Epilepsy is a common brain disorder characterized by recurrent seizures. Today, approximately 90,000 in Ontario have epilepsy. There remains no cure for this complex neurological disorder; however, proper treatment can help control seizures, assisting the person to live their life to the fullest. Given that Saturday is Purple Day, I encourage people to visit the Epilepsy Ontario website to learn more about this disorder and how to help someone having a seizure.

Additionally, stigma is one barrier that people with epilepsy face, and advocacy is an equally important tool for improving people's lives. Spread awareness, educate yourself, educate others and eliminate the misconceptions related to epilepsy. Together, we can make a difference for many lives throughout this province.

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Unfortunately, I rise again today to bring awareness to a situation that continues to evolve in rural Ontario across the province. It's the closure of small, rural, remote schools. Constituents in my riding of Essex and specifically Harrow continue to fight the closure of the Harrow high school there, a school that has been a hallmark of that community. Generations of families have sent their kids there, and it continues to be a hub of community spirit and, of course, educational resources for the kids that attend that school.

However, the provincial government continues on their path to destroy rural schools in Ontario. I've met with the parents. I've met with students and alumni who are continuing to collect signatures to fight the provincial government on their efforts.

However, today the government announced that life would once again get harder for parents and families in rural Ontario. The Grants for Student Needs funding announced today includes deep cuts to the Geographic Circumstances Grant, a lifeline for rural schools in my community and, I would imagine, rural schools around the province of Ontario.

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This is a continuous dismantling of rural education in the province. You are breaking apart communities. You are forcing kids to travel long distances to go to schools that are outside of their home communities and, again, affecting the livelihood of small, rural Ontario. I hope the government changes their direction, because it's affecting our communities.

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Arthur Potts: It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak about Greek Independence Day. Today, Greeks all

across Ontario, and indeed the world over, are celebrating the 195th anniversary of Greek independence. It's the day that the Greeks said no to the Ottoman Empire.

Today, Speaker, I had the privilege to join you, the Premier, consul general-elect Alexandros Ioannidis—who I see is in the crowd, and welcome to Queen's Park—and the Greek community of Toronto to commemorate Greek Independence Day. I look forward to seeing everyone again very soon at the Danforth parade.

Ontario is home to about 140,000 people of Greek descent. This is a momentous occasion to come together as Ontarians and honour what Greece has given to the world, but also honour the significant contributions across all fields that the Greek community has provided right here in the province. Toronto, including my riding of Beaches–East York, is home to one of the most vibrant Greek communities outside of Greece. I look forward to working with the community and enhancing our productive relationships.

In 1982, I bought my first home in Greektown, on the Danforth, and developed excellent relations with the community at that time, including resurrecting and saving their wonderful delicacy known as kokoretsi.

On this day, as we come together to celebrate 195 years of Greek independence, we give our thanks to everything the Hellenic community in Ontario has given our province. Zito É Ellas.

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Robert Bailey: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure today to take the opportunity to recognize the presence of the consul general of Greece, Alexandros Ioannidis, and his wife; and other members of the Greek community of Toronto who are here today with us at Queen's Park. We just had a flag-raising and there are some more celebrations going on.

On March 25, members of the Greek community from around the world will celebrate Greece's National Day of Independence, which is observed both as a national and religious day of celebration by Greeks. It is a national holiday commemorating Greece's war of independence from centuries of Ottoman rule.

The Greek revolt was precipitated on March 25, 1821, when Bishop Germanos raised the flag of revolution over the Monastery of Agia Lávra. The cry for freedom became the motto of the movement. It is also considered one of the holiest days for Greek Orthodox Christians, celebrating as it is the Annunciation of the Theotokos.

The Greek community here in Ontario has thrived for about a hundred years or more, contributing immensely to the political, economic and social fabric of our province. Be it in business or in academia, the Greek community has always played an important role in shaping our province's civic and cultural institutions.

Today at Queen's Park, we had our Greek flag-raising ceremony. I would like to take this opportunity to invite all members and visitors to the Greek Independence Day reception in room 228 at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, using my best Greek possible, Zito É Ellas, Zito to Ontario and Zito O Kanadas.

NUTRITION MONTH

Mr. Granville Anderson: Every year, Dietitians of Canada and thousands of dietitians working here in Ontario help promote healthy eating through celebrating Nutrition Month in March. This year, Dietitians of Canada is challenging Canadians to take a 100-meal journey by pledging to make a small change to their eating habits and to stick with it, one meal at a time.

March 16 was marked as Dietitians Day to recognize the work of dietitians and the value they bring to the health care system right here in Ontario. By preventing and managing chronic diseases and promoting recovery, dietitians are a cost-effective investment in health care. Promoting access to dietitians' care and supporting them to work at their full scope of practice helps achieve good health.

I would like to thank the team of dietitians who met with me in my office for their education and passion, and I would like to congratulate everyone as we come to the close of a very successful Nutrition Month.

INSURANCE FRAUD

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to remind everyone that March is Fraud Prevention Month. Throughout this month, the Ontario government and other organizations have been encouraging Ontarians to recognize, reject and report fraud.

Today, I'd like to highlight organized insurance fraud. It's a serious problem that impacts the cost of insurance for all consumers and is estimated to cost upward of \$1 billion in Ontario alone.

Only a few people commit insurance fraud, but it costs everyone. One specific example I'd like to mention is an Aviva Canada investigation that has been recently covered in media reports on W5 and by Paul Bliss on CTV News. The coverage shows video footage of staff at both a health care clinic and a law firm encouraging and counselling undercover investigators to commit fraud.

The responsibility of these professionals is to protect accident victims, but instead they encourage the role players to lie so that they could submit phoney forms and collect insurance payments for services never supplied. The Toronto police have since laid charges on all these three professionals.

Auto accident victims rely on health care providers to help them recover, as well as restore their lives. Unfortunately, in instances like these, these innocent victims are targeted when they are most vulnerable, and their pain and tragedies are manipulated. This needs to stop, Mr. Speaker. Let's continue to work together to fight fraud.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

Just as he's exiting—as Speaker, I have always welcomed and thanked our consular corps for being here—I want to bring attention to the consul general of

Greece and his boss, his wife, for being here and also our guests today for the flag-raising. Welcome to the consul general and to our guests.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I beg leave to present the first report 2016 from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ms. Naidoo-Harris presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Yes, Speaker. I would like to thank the committee and support staff for all their hard work and diligence in preparing this thorough report. I know you have all put a great deal of time and effort into this, and it's fantastic to see that it culminated in this important document. It makes several recommendations that will be key to our progress, moving forward.

Thank you, and I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ms. Naidoo-Harris moves adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I have a petition from the Ontario Medical Association.

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

We have 2,000 signatures on this petition. I affix my signature to it. I agree with it and I give it to page Sohan.

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AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario faces an affordable housing crisis; and

“Whereas one in every three renter households lives in housing that is unaffordable, inadequate, or in serious need of repair, and more than 165,000 families across Ontario are waiting for rent-geared-to-income housing; and

“Whereas inclusionary zoning laws have helped create affordable housing and alleviate poverty in more than 200 communities across the United States; and

“Whereas research by the Wellesley Institute, ACORN Canada and the Furman Centre have shown that inclusionary zoning could create thousands of affordable housing units a year in Ontario, without significant impact on the production of market housing, and without any cost to the taxpayer;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact a law empowering municipalities across the province to pass inclusionary zoning bylaws, which mandate that a specified percentage of new residential developments include affordable housing units.”

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to affix my signature and give it to Harry to be delivered to the table.

DORIS WARD

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: My petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Scarborough Southwest resident Doris Ward celebrated her 90th birthday last Saturday, March 19, 2016;

“Whereas she first volunteered in a federal election in 1935 with her grandfather by delivering election pamphlets by horse and buggy throughout the riding of Provencher, Manitoba;

“Whereas Doris Ward became an active community member in 1979 by opening a beauty salon and creating the second business improvement area in Toronto in the community of Cliffside;

“Whereas Doris Ward continues to be a very active community member in the riding of Scarborough Southwest;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize Doris Ward as an outstanding person.”

I agree with this, and I affix my signature to it.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the price of electricity has skyrocketed under the Ontario Liberal government;

“Whereas ever-higher hydro bills are a huge concern for everyone in the province, especially seniors and others on fixed incomes, who can't afford to pay more;

“Whereas Ontario's businesses say high electricity costs are making them uncompetitive, and have contributed to the loss of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs;

“Whereas the recent Auditor General's report found Ontarians overpaid for electricity by \$37 billion over the past eight years and estimates that we will overpay by an additional \$133 billion over the next 18 years if nothing changes;

“Whereas the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants costing \$1.1 billion, feed-in tariff (FIT) contracts with wind and solar companies, the sale of surplus energy to neighbouring jurisdictions at a loss, the debt retirement charge, the global adjustment and smart meters that haven't met their conservation targets have all put upward pressure on hydro bills;

“Whereas the sale of 60% of Hydro One is opposed by a majority of Ontarians and will likely only lead to even higher hydro bills;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To listen to Ontarians, reverse course on the Liberal government's current hydro policies and take immediate steps to stabilize hydro bills.”

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Wayne Gates: “Petition to Stop the Plan to Increase Seniors' Drug Costs.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario will require most seniors to pay significantly more for prescription drugs, starting on August 1st, 2016, under changes to the Ontario Drug Benefit;

“Whereas most seniors will be required to pay a higher annual deductible of \$170 and higher co-payments each and every time they fill a prescription at their pharmacy;

“Whereas the average Ontario senior requires at least eight different types of drugs each year to stay healthy and maintain their independence; and

“Whereas many seniors on fixed incomes simply cannot afford to pay more for prescription drugs and should not be forced to skip medications that they can no longer afford and to put their health in jeopardy;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Stop the government's plans to make most Ontario seniors pay more for necessary prescription drugs and instead work to expand prescription drug coverage for all Ontarians.”

I'll sign my name. I agree with the petition.

ELDER ABUSE

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas today, there are more seniors 65 and over than children under the age of 15, both in Ontario and across Canada;

"Whereas there are currently more than two million seniors aged 65 and over—approximately 15% of the population and this number is expected to double in the next 25 years;

"Whereas Elder Abuse Ontario stated that between 40,000 and 200,000 seniors living in Ontario experienced or are experiencing elder abuse;

"Whereas research showed that abuse against seniors takes many forms and is often perpetrated by family members;

"Whereas financial and emotional abuse are the most frequently reported elder abuse cases;

"Whereas current Ontario legislation incorporates the Residents' Bill of Rights, mandates abuse prevention, investigation and reporting of seniors living in either long-term-care facilities or retirement homes;

"Whereas the majority of the seniors currently and in the future live in the community;

"Whereas Bill 148, if passed, will ensure seniors living in the community have the same protection and support as those seniors living in long-term-care facilities and retirement homes;

"Whereas Bill 148, if passed, will require regulated health professionals to report elder abuse or neglect to the public guardian and trustee office;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the members of the Ontario Legislative Assembly pass Bill 148, An Act to amend the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992 and the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, requiring health professionals to report any reasonable suspicion that a senior living in the community is being abused or neglected to the public guardian and trustee office."

I support the petition, and will give my petition to page Ariel.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Lorne Coe: A petition from the Ontario Medical Association to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

I agree with the content, I'll affix my signature and provide it to the page.

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I have a petition to preserve community schools that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it is right for Ontario youth to be educated in their home communities;

"Whereas accessible schools that students can walk, bike or take a short ride to promote healthy lifestyles, a cleaner environment and emotional well-being;

"Whereas the economies of smaller rural towns are directly strengthened and vitalized by high schools in their own communities;

"Whereas community schools best serve special populations;

"Whereas rural high schools more than 15 km from the next high school should be considered eligible for enhanced top-up funding;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To direct support and resources to Ontario rural community schools, such as Harrow District High School, so as to provide and sustain accessible education for youth within their home communities, preserving and sustaining rural town culture that diversifies the fabric of the province of Ontario."

I agree with the petition, will affix my name and send it to the Clerks' table via page Jack.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House this afternoon to read this petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal

dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

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“Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province....”

I agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the table with page Christina.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Rick Nicholls: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“The recent decision by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services to put an end to funding for sheltered workshops and special employment services for people with special needs in Ontario. Community Living Chatham-Kent now supports 475 people and their families and employs more than 250 people. The Ministry of Community and Social Services provides 90% of the funding with the remainder coming from donations, fundraising activities, grants and foundations.

“We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who urge our leaders to act now and put a stop to this decision and reinstate the funding and programs to their previous state.”

I approve of this petition, sign it and will give it to page Joshua.

ONTARIO MUNICIPAL BOARD

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “Whereas the Ontario Municipal Board is a provincial agency composed of unelected members unaccountable to Ontarians; and

“Whereas the Ontario Municipal Board has the power to unilaterally alter local development decisions made by municipalities and their communities; and

“Whereas the city of Toronto is the largest city in Ontario; and

“Whereas the city of Toronto has a planning department composed of professional planners, an extensive legal department and 44 full-time city councillors directly elected by its citizens; and

“Whereas Toronto’s city council voted overwhelmingly in February 2012 to request an exemption from the Ontario Municipal Board’s jurisdiction;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the ability of the

city of Toronto to handle its own urban planning and development; and

“Further, that the Ontario Municipal Board no longer have jurisdiction over the city of Toronto.”

I couldn’t agree more. I’m going to sign it and give it to Barton to be delivered to the table.

LUNG HEALTH

Mr. Chris Ballard: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas lung disease affects 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario;

“Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

“In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

“One in five Ontario schoolchildren has asthma;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry’s private member’s bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a lung health advisory council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues; and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario lung health action plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

“Once debated at committee to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I regret to inform the House that the time for petitions has expired.

However, I would also remind the members—because there are times when members want to get a petition on and don’t get the opportunity; we’re all in that situation at times—that you don’t have to read the entire petition. If you think about other members who might want to do petitions during the course of an afternoon and who didn’t get a chance, you might want to think about them when you’re reading a long petition, because you don’t have to read the whole content—just a reminder.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in her office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): The following is the title of the bill to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016 / Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2016.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

**ALBANIAN HERITAGE
MONTH ACT, 2016**

**LOI DE 2016 SUR LE MOIS
DU PATRIMOINE ALBANAIS**

Mrs. Albanese moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 145, An Act to proclaim the month of November as Albanian Heritage Month / Projet de loi 145, Loi proclamant le mois de novembre Mois du patrimoine albanais.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: It is a privilege to rise and address this House and lead the debate on Bill 145. I would like, first of all, to welcome the numerous members from the Albanian community who have joined us here in the legislative chamber. Among them is the formidable honorary president of the Albanian Canadian Community Association and chairman of the ACCA Albanian heritage group, Dr. Ruki Kondaj. Ruki and I have worked together to propose this bill, which would recognize November as Albanian Heritage Month in the province of Ontario.

I would also like to acknowledge the chargé d'affaires of the Republic of Kosovo in Canada, Mr. Lulzim Hiseni—welcome—and members of the media, such as Albania Reflections; the lovely dancing group Little Eagles; and the representatives of the various associations that are here with us today. Welcome to all of you. Mirëdita.

Mr. Speaker, this bill provides our province with an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the Albanian-Canadian community living here in Ontario. I think it would be fitting if November would be proclaimed Albanian Heritage Month in our province, as during this month this community celebrates two important dates: Albanian Independence Day, or flag day, which falls on November 28, marks the date when, in 1912, Albania proclaimed its independence from the Ottoman Empire; and November 29, which is recognized as Albanian Liberation Day. The Albanian-Canadian community celebrates these dates in Ontario by raising the Albanian flag here at Queen's Park, as well as by organizing cultural performances and banquet dinners throughout our province and the rest of Canada.

I'd like to say something about the history of this resilient community which now lives in our great province. As many would know, Albania is a small country nestled in the Balkan peninsula in southeastern Europe, with coastlines on the Adriatic and Ionian seas, just above Greece and east of Italy. Albania today is a beautiful tourist destination that offers enchanting landscapes and sites. In 2015, it was listed as one of the top 10 most visited destinations in the world; but it was not always so. The country has had a long and troubled history.

First, we need to clarify that Albanians in Canada came from different European countries: Albania itself, Kosovo, Macedonia, Greece, Serbia and Turkey. This is explained by the geopolitics of the beginning of the 20th century, mainly characterized by Albanian territories being annexed by neighbouring Balkan countries.

Second, it is very important to understand the national identity of Albanians. Again, we have to look back in history. Albanians are a very ancient people, descendants of the ancient Illyrians. During most of their history, they have been conquered and ruled by three big empires: Romans, Byzantines and Ottomans. These long occupations brought significant anthropological and social changes; most important, the introduction of three major religions: Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Islam. However, their national identity has remained strong through the centuries. Their patriotism is rooted in two pillars: their common land and their language.

Albanians began coming to Canada after the First World War. The first wave of immigration consisted of immigrants leaving the country mainly in search of better economic opportunities.

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The second wave of immigration occurred after the Second World War. These were mainly refugees escaping the Communist rule in Albania and Yugoslavia and from the Republic of Macedonia.

The third and largest wave saw about 20,000 people, predominantly skilled workers, leave the country after 1990, together with at least 5,000 Kosovo Albanians, who were accepted as refugees in 1999 by the Canadian government.

Today, according to ACCA, there are about 40,000 Albanians who call Ontario home, and another 20,000 live in other Canadian provinces. The majority of Albanian Canadians living in our province have chosen to live in the greater Toronto area and in other cities such as Hamilton, London, Kitchener, Ottawa, Peterborough and Windsor. They have a vibrant community life. Nowadays, Albanians in Ontario count on several community associations, and within our school system there are seven different elementary schools that offer language classes where the children learn the Albanian language and study history and traditions.

One unifying force within the community is the Albanian Canadian Community Association, or ACCA, which was established on August 11, 1989. This was an important milestone for the whole Albanian community in Canada, accomplished through the hard and commend-

able work of the founding committee, which succeeded to establish and make it legally viable on November 4, 1990.

The Albanian Canadian Community Association of Toronto is one of the nerve centres of the community's social activities. The association is developing a greater awareness and pride amongst its members and within the entire Canadian community as to who Albanian Canadians are, where they came from and their aspirations.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a minute or two to share my personal connections with the Albanian community. As you may be aware, I was born and raised in Italy before coming to Canada. I was born in a seaside town called Taranto, in the region of Apulia. Apulia, in southeastern Italy, encompasses the heel of Italy's boot, right across from Albania. My last name is Albanese, which literally means "from Albania." Although I have never explored the personal history of my family name, there is an ethnic and linguistic Albanian minority community that has long lived in southern Italy. They are the Arbëreshë, or Italo-Albanians. They settled in southern Italy between the 15th and 18th centuries, in several waves of migration, following the death of the Albanian national hero George Kastrioti Skanderbeg. Their culture is determined by the main features that are found in language, religion, traditions, customs, art and gastronomy, still jealously preserved. Today there are about 50 Arbëreshë communities and villages scattered throughout southern Italy.

During my previous career in multicultural broadcasting, I had the opportunity to meet, interview and get to know representatives of the Arbëreshë community living in Toronto. It is a community I have long been familiar with.

During my election campaigns, I have been frequently stopped and have been asked many times by members of the Albanian community here in Canada if my roots are Albanian. They may be, Mr. Speaker. One day I will endeavour to find out.

Mr. Speaker, in my capacity as MPP for York South-Weston, I came to know and grew very fond of Dr. Ruki Kondaj. We spoke about how the presence and the contributions of Albanian Canadians could be better recognized here in the province of Ontario. Hence, we started working closely together on making this bill become a reality.

Albanian Canadians have contributed greatly over the last century to the social fabric of our country. Their capacity to integrate well in Canadian society reflects their strong family and cultural values. They have a strong work ethic, recognizable in the numerous success stories in the community, the great many individuals who have distinguished themselves, whether in business, science, the arts, and the great number of Albanian-Canadian youth who attend our universities and colleges.

Albanians have remained proud of their rich cultural heritage. Albanian Canadians have held onto their traditional customs, songs and dances, musical instruments, stories, legends, oral histories and literature, all so dear to

them. They have held onto the code of Besa, a collection of principles which regulated Albanian social, economic and religious lives, together with traditional customs and cultural practices of the Albanian society between the year 1400 till today.

"Besa," for example, means taking care of those in need and being hospitable. During World War II, Albanians saved over 2,000 Jews from Nazi persecution. Rather than hiding the Jews in attics or in the woods, Albanians gave them clothes, gave them Albanian names, and treated them as part of their family. The concept of Besa is incorporated into their culture.

Albanian Canadians honour interreligious harmony and hold onto their language, which is without a doubt one of the oldest in the world.

On the day I presented the first reading of this bill in the Legislature last November 2015, we had the honour to hear in this very building an Arbëreshë song that is more than 500 years old and is sung by all Albanians everywhere. "Moj e Bukura More" was brilliantly performed here by soprano Mirela Tafaj.

I would be remiss if I failed to mention in my speech two of the most prominent Albanian national heroes, held in great esteem by this community.

The first, whom I have previously mentioned in my speech, is Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg, Albania's national hero, who fought against the Ottoman Empire in the 15th century.

The second is Mother Teresa, the Catholic humanitarian well known all over the world for her missionary work, first in Ireland, then in India, where she lived most of her life. Mother Teresa, winner of the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize, is a model for all modern Albanians—and, I would say, beyond. Just last week, Pope Francis announced that she will be made a saint of the Roman Catholic Church at a ceremony that will be held in Rome next September 4.

Mr. Speaker, the contributions of the Albanian community are clearly felt not only in Ontario, but across the world. As a country, Canada has been built on the value of recognizing and respecting our rich cultural diversity, celebrating the traditions and values of the people who have immigrated here and the contributions they are making today as Canadians.

I therefore hope and ask all of my colleagues here in this Legislature to help me recognize November as Albanian Heritage Month in the province of Ontario. As I said at the beginning, I think it would be fitting; it is the month that the community would like the best for recognizing its heritage.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Falemenderit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to rise today to speak on Bill 145, An Act to proclaim the month of November as Albanian Heritage Month. It was very, very quiet in the room, which for a Thursday before a break is somewhat unusual; usually people have a lot to talk about and ask each other what they're doing for the Easter

weekend or whatever holiday is coming up. But people were very quiet. Why? Because the member from York South–Weston gave such a beautiful speech, and it was so interesting. We all learned a lot; I know I certainly did.

I didn't know that much about Albania or Albanian history, and I reached out to one of my team members up in Vaughan. His name is Ariel Sahatcija. I want to make sure I say his name. He's here with his mom; her name is Dhurata Sahatcija. We can all say hello. I want to really thank Ariel, because he helped me put together a little bit of what I'm going to read to you to start off with today.

Albania is also known as Shqipëri—I'm sure I'm not saying that right, but I try—which means “land of the eagles.” Albanians are also known as Shqipëtar, or “sons of eagles,” and early on identified with this noble symbol, which became their national symbol and is proudly displayed on their flag. I recall seeing their flag with the eagle on it; it's very distinct.

Albania is one of the smallest countries in Europe, and yet it is filled with exceptionally beautiful landscapes: mountain peaks covered with snow in the summertime, incredible sea cliffs and green plateaus, tall forests, rivers and lakes known for their crystal clear waters and home to an abundance of flora and fauna. The Albanian Riviera harbours the best untouched golden beaches, from the coastal lowlands lapped by the Adriatic Sea to the rugged mountainous coastline of the Ionian Sea, which is an elongation of the Mediterranean.

1350

It really sounds like someplace we all want to visit. I know that I sometimes get to travel to francophone destinations, so I'm hoping to hear very soon that there's a francophone community somewhere in Albania.

A country located in the Balkan peninsula, as old as the land itself, through its rich and ancient language has inherited, generation after generation, the names of mountains, rivers, heroes, myths, legends, divinities and traditions.

Albanians are a courageous people who have fought throughout the centuries for their existence. The 15th century marked one of the most painful yet glorious chapters in Albanian history. As the invading Ottoman armies were pushing through what was left of the Byzantine Empire and advancing menacingly toward western Europe, Albanian resistance, under the leadership of Skanderbeg, Albania's national hero, halted the invasion and repelled the Ottomans for a quarter of a century. The member for York South–Weston mentioned their hero, and you can certainly see why they worshipped him.

In the early 20th century, as the Ottoman Empire was falling apart, Albania was once again in peril of being partitioned and wiped off the map of Europe. Brave Albanian patriots from all Albanian regions convened an all-Albanian assembly and declared the country's independence. Even as independence was declared, Albania's sovereignty and statehood was uncertain. Only after US President Woodrow Wilson interceded on Albania's behalf at the Paris Peace Conference did

Albania subsequently receive international recognition from the League of Nations.

In World War II, Albanians overwhelmingly listed their support on the Allied side, resisted the invasion and fought to liberate their country against occupying Axis forces. At the conclusion of the war, Albanians emerged victorious, with casualties estimated around 28,000.

After the war, a Communist regime was installed in Albania. The regime successfully mobilized large parts of the population in order to rebuild the country after the war. Hope for a better future prevailed among the youth. The massive mobilization efforts, especially popular among young people, resulted in improvements to infrastructure, health and education. However, because of political oppression and an inefficient economic model, the system's shortcomings became visible not only in Albania but in other European countries with similar regimes.

After the collapse of communism in Europe, a pluralistic system and free market economy replaced the old one in Albania. Albania became a full member of NATO in 2009, and since 2014, Albania has become an official candidate for accession to the European Union.

The character of Albanians is marked by values such as tolerance and hospitality. During World War II, Albanians demonstrated to all that their love of fellow humans was stronger than fear and doubt in murky times. They sheltered and protected all Jews who lived or landed in Albania despite placing their own families at risk. At the conclusion of the war, the Jewish population in Albania had at least doubled, which means that people came from other countries to be protected. I'm now going to have to look up if there are any Righteous Among the Nations listed for Albanians.

Albania's religious landscape is noted for its tolerance and respect of different faiths. This virtue has been cultivated through hundreds of years and has become an admirable standard of peaceful and respectful coexistence. A great example, as we heard just before, is Mother Teresa, who will be canonized on September 4. She founded the Missionaries of Charity, a Roman Catholic religious congregation that was active in 133 countries, thus making her a citizen of the world and promoter of peace. Her commitment to assist the poorest of the poor, the ailing and the disabled is a higher model of service to humanity. Former Secretary-General of the United Nations Perez de Cuellar has said of her, “She is the United Nations. She is peace in the world.”

In 1979, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. She refused the ceremonial banquet to be given in her honour and asked that the prize funds be given to the poor of India. In 1985, US President Ronald Reagan awarded her the Presidential Medal of Freedom. He described her as a “heroine of our times.” Although this award is traditionally given to US citizens, Reagan explained that “the goodness in some hearts transcends” all national boundaries.

Her house has been visited in her time by many dignitaries, such as Queen Elizabeth, George Herbert

Walker Bush and Princess Diana. When once asked where she hailed from, she responded, "I am Albanian by birth, Indian by citizenship, Catholic nun by faith, and by profession I belong to the world. My country is a small country; it is called Albania."

This demonstrates, I think, to all of us the passion that many Canadians have for their country of birth, their cultural heritage and their religion.

As the new associate PC critic for culture, the new PC critic for anti-racism, the PC critic for francophone affairs—I also represent francophone women's issues for all three caucuses, and I'm the liaison for the Jewish community for the PC caucus. I think there is a little bit of symbolism there as to why I enjoy going to all the events: the flag raisings, the receptions, meeting all the communities and learning a few words. There is a limit to how many languages I can cope with. I find that when I learn a new one, I forget some of the words of the other ones that I knew. I really enjoy meeting people from the different cultures and communities.

I think that I can speak on behalf of all of my colleagues on all sides of the House when I say how much we enjoy everybody when they come and visit us. Oftentimes, there's food involved, and that's not the only reason we go. We really do enjoy learning about all the cultures and history and traditions. Really, it's what makes our job fun. So we really salute all of you who take time out of your busy days to be here with us and to celebrate with us. Oftentimes, people thank for me for being at their reception or their event, but really it's us who wish to thank all of you. So thank you very much for being here today.

Of course, I think it's very clear that, on behalf of the PC caucus, I'm happy to say that we support November—and we've heard from the previous member, who presented her private member's bill, why November should be the heritage month for the Albanian community.

I just want to mention to people from the Albanian community here that we have quite a few months celebrating different communities, and I think it's wonderful. If we have to start doubling up the months, I think we're all prepared to do that. May is Jewish Heritage Month. That private member's bill was put forward by my former colleague for Thornhill, as well as the present member for Eglinton—Lawrence and the present member for Parkdale—High Park, who's here. The member for Davenport just presented not that long ago, this past year, for Spanish heritage month. We had a presentation for Ukrainian heritage month. June is Italian Heritage Month. April is Sikh Heritage Month. Just today, we are welcoming people from the Greek community for the Greek flag raising. I'm not aware of a Greek heritage month—there's a little bit of a hint going on there.

How do kids learn to remember the traditions, the language, the values and even the food in their community? Well, the families do their best to teach them, but it certainly does help when there's a school in the community with a certain ethnic group. It helps if there

are afternoon programs, and if the churches, synagogues and temples host programs to teach the kids. It's nice when the kids can come down and join their families at Queen's Park, but we mostly see children at all the cultural centres and banquet halls.

Until I got elected, Mr. Speaker, I wasn't aware of how many banquet halls there are across the GTA. Every two weeks, it seems like there's another one that you have to get on your GPS.

I often say to myself, as I'm sure the other members do, "Am I dressed right for the event? What colour should I be wearing in this community?" In your invitations to us, feel free to say, "We like it when it's red for Chinese New Year."

We really want to be part of your community. We really relish the special scarves we're given or things to wear to fit in. And we love the pictures that we're given. Oftentimes, the communities will email us those pictures. Just to let the community members know today, those pictures get put on our websites; they get put in our mailings and our newsletters; they get put on Facebook and Twitter and all over social media. We really enjoy celebrating with all of you.

I want to congratulate the member again for her presentation today, and I want to thank all of you for coming down and celebrating with us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Niagara Falls.

Applause.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you for that applause. I don't know what I did to deserve it.

1400

First of all, I want to welcome the Albanian Canadians here today to Queen's Park. Instead of us standing, why don't you stand so we can recognize you?

I'm very pleased to be able to rise today and speak to Bill 145, An Act to proclaim the month of November as Albanian Heritage Month—which we all hope will be in November.

The history and the heritage of Albania is long and very complicated. It's a mixture of stories about the best of what we can find in people and, unfortunately, sometimes the worst. It's also a story of keeping one's language and culture alive. It's a story of strength and community. I think it's a story that we can all be proud to remember.

Niagara Falls is one of the oldest parts of the country, and for centuries—centuries—people have come to Niagara Falls to visit and to work. Because of that, we see an incredible mix of cultures in my part of Ontario. I understand how important their language and their culture are, and I'm also proud of their efforts to keep those ties very much alive. I've seen first-hand in my riding the power of community and the power of keeping culture alive. It's a beautiful thing to see and it's an equally beautiful thing to celebrate. That's why I'm happy to see this heritage recognized.

Mr. Speaker, the history of Albania is a long and complex one. I won't be able to go into every detail here.

I'm sure many of you realize that I am not a historian, so I doubt I'll be able to do justice to this wonderful country's heritage. We do know that some of the first Albanians to come here came at the beginning of the 20th century. They settled across Canada, but mostly in places like Montreal and Toronto—Toronto because they wanted to see the Leafs. Why did they come? Well, they, like so many others throughout our incredible history, were seeking a better life. They were strong people who were fleeing violence or uprisings in their home countries. They wanted to take the best of their culture and make a better life for their kids and their grandkids. They wanted a chance to work hard and to make a life for themselves. I think that's what every Canadian story is all about.

I want to look at my own family. I'm married to an Italian. My father-in-law, Mr. DeLuca—I wanted to mention his name today because he has been sick for a while—I see the same story in him. My wife's father came to this country so that he could give his children—very similar, like you—a better life. He wasn't looking for favours; he was looking for an opportunity. With that opportunity he was able to raise his family and help build the great community that Niagara Falls is today. He was able to build two houses and raise four kids—all well-educated, all university-educated. I know that this is a story that applies to the Albanians who came to Canada and to so many others that we celebrate throughout the years. I believe it's one of the things that truly makes this province and this country great.

As more and more Albanians came to Canada, they began to set up associations to help new immigrants. They were helping them with their language skills, making sure they had what they needed to succeed. In the spirit of community, that's what we can celebrate. That dedication to one another is something that's worth celebrating. These were people who had come across an ocean and they were still dedicated to their neighbours—they were dedicated to making sure Albanian Canadians could succeed here in Canada and in Ontario.

I'm just going to give a little bit of history that I believe helps explain why this act is important and why it deserves our support. On November 28, 1912—I want you all to remember this in November—the All-Albanian Congress created the Assembly of Vlorë. In their first meeting, they declared Albania an independent country and set up the provisional government of Albania.

The first government of Albania would serve until 1914, when a monarchy was re-established, which would then become the first Albanian Republic in 1925. Just reading through the history of the country, you can see that times have been tough. In the 91 years since Albania declared independence, the people have come under both Nazi and then Soviet control. The horrors in those times are known to us and do not need repeating in this House.

I'll close by saying that the strength and the will of the Albanian people to make a country, a culture and a heritage for themselves are truly inspiring. They have kept alive a language and a culture unique to their people

in the face of huge opposition, and they now deserve to be recognized for their tremendous effort.

They came to Canada to seek a better life, and did so while never forgetting where they came from. Their heritage is part of our heritage, and it's worth remembering.

Mr. Speaker, there may not be as many Albanians in my riding as some other cultural groups—I do have a lot of Italians in Niagara Falls—but they are just as important in everybody's eyes. Albanians are a part of our history and a part of the spirit of Canada and of my community. As I have mentioned, I have seen this spirit in my riding, and it's part of what makes Niagara Falls so great.

On behalf of the people in Niagara Falls riding and the people of Ontario, I am proud to celebrate this continued spirit of acceptance and stand today to support Bill 145, An Act to proclaim the month of November as Albanian Heritage Month.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and Albanian Canadians for giving me a chance to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I appreciate the opportunity to engage in this debate today—a debate that I think brings us all together on all sides of the House. This is the second reading of the Albanian Heritage Month Act. You might wonder why, as a kid from Scarborough whose last name is Duguid—it doesn't mean I come from Albania—and whose riding has some Albanians but not a huge number of Albanians, it was so important for me to get up and speak here today. I'll explain that to you in a minute, but I want to acknowledge—we don't always acknowledge our staff here—that the speech I have before me today was written by a young man by the name of Aleks Dhefto, whom I hired some time ago. Aleks is just over here. He happens to be Albanian. Aleks, could you poke your head out the door? I'm not saying that to get credit; it was a smart decision to hire an Albanian. I didn't know Aleks was Albanian when I hired him, but I should have guessed because of how his name is spelled. He has done a great job.

1410

Aleks, I apologize; I'm not going to give the speech as you've written it. I would have loved to, but a lot of the comments and a lot of the things Aleks recommended that I say about the great history, the migration, the independence of Albania and the pride of this community have already been said. What I want to do in a very short period of time, as I want to leave time for my colleagues, is explain why it was so important for me to speak here today.

In the audience is a very good friend of mine, Dr. Ruki Kondaj—you can stand up if you want, Ruki. Ruki is the honorary president of the Albanian Canadian Community Association, and she's just a going concern. Ruki actually lived in my riding for a period of time, and I met her back around 2011. She invited me to an Albanian function. I had never been to one before. I didn't have a

huge Albanian population in Scarborough, so we never had a lot of those before. Eventually, she talked me into going, and I went and had a fantastic time. I met her community. I was so blown away by the talent of the singers, the talent of the dancers, the food, the talent of the actors—there are many Albanian actors as well—and the friendliness and welcoming feeling that I got in the room. They even made me dance with them that night, and I never ever looked back.

From then on, I attended all the Albanian functions. Ruki would often make me attend. She would twist my arm and say, “You have to come,” but she didn’t really have to twist my arm. It’s a beautiful community. It is a welcoming community. It is a community that loves to celebrate their heritage and their history, as we can see by the dress here at the Ontario Legislature today. It’s a community that I have very much loved being associated with. In many ways, they say to me that they’ve adopted me as one of their own, and I’m very, very proud of that.

I just want to say thank you to the Albanian community, represented by their leaders here today, for the incredible contribution you make to our province, to our culture and to our business community. I want to thank you for adopting me. I very much appreciate that as well. I am honoured by being associated with the work you’ve done through the years, and I’ll continue to be a huge fan and a huge supporter in the years ahead.

This is a really important bill that I think we’re going to pass here in this Legislature today. I thank all the legislators here for their support of this, and I thank the community for coming and for the great contribution they make to our province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Yvan Baker: “Mirëdita” to our guests in the Albanian-Canadian community. Welcome. It’s my honour to stand here in the Legislature and speak in support of this wonderful bill, the Albanian Heritage Month Act, and to be joined by so many members of our Albanian-Canadian community.

I’d like to start by congratulating my friend, MPP colleague and neighbour to the east, the member for York South–Weston, and congratulate her for this wonderful initiative and bill; I’m proud to be able to stand and support it. I’d also like to welcome the esteemed guests we have today. At the risk of being repetitive, I’d like to welcome you again, Dr. Ruki Kondaj. Your contributions to the community have been well spoken to here, so I won’t talk about that as much, but I thank you for coming and thank you for your leadership of the community. I’d also like to thank you for your work alongside Ms. Albanese in the preparation of this bill and the organization of this.

I’d just like to take a couple of minutes to talk about why I think this bill is so important. I’d like to tell a brief story about my upbringing. My grandparents and mother immigrated to Canada. They weren’t of Albanian heritage, but they were of Eastern European heritage. For years, I used to attend Saturday school. My mother and

my grandparents used to send me to Saturday school to learn about my history and heritage and their backgrounds. I remember that every Saturday after school my grandfather would pick me up and we’d do homework. He’d help me do my Ukrainian school homework at his place. We’d be sitting there and I’d be working away learning about my culture and heritage. But I didn’t want to be sitting at his place on Saturday afternoon; I wanted to be out doing what young people do. I remember one day in particular I was frustrated and I said to him, “Gido, why are we doing this? I don’t want to do this anymore. I want to stop.”

And he said: “Yvan, you can’t stop. Let me tell you why. You have to learn about your history, you have to learn about your heritage and you have to do that not only so you understand where you come from, but also so that you understand the people who came before you, the people who have come and made Canada so great as well.”

That’s really what this bill is about to me: It’s about celebrating Albanian history and Albanian heritage, but it’s also about celebrating the contributions that this wonderful community is making to our city, to our province and to our country. When we celebrate our history, our cultural heritage, we maintain our ties, we learn about our ancestors. The Albanian community, as has been spoken to by members on both sides, has a very rich history, a very rich culture. This bill aims to recognize that.

But I also spoke of the other reason that I think this bill is important, and again, that is to recognize the contributions the community is making to our province. The contributions Albanians have made span communities across our province. It’s not just Toronto; it’s well outside of the GTA. You have made a contribution in our social, in our political, in our business, in our cultural life. You’ve helped make Canada the great country it is today. For that, I thank you, and I think this bill helps us celebrate that as well.

In my riding of Etobicoke Centre, I’ve had the pleasure of getting to know some of the members of my Albanian-Canadian community. I look forward to getting to know more. One of the reasons Ms. Albanese proposed November as Albanian Heritage Month is because this is the month when we celebrate Albanian Independence Day. I had the privilege of celebrating Albanian Independence Day with the community on a number of occasions. I’ve also had my arm twisted by Dr. Ruki Kondaj. I’ve had this honour of celebrating—we’ve had the flag raisings here at Queen’s Park, we’ve had celebrations in the community. Members of the community during those celebrations have told me why they thought this day was so important, why they thought November was so important: because independence was a great accomplishment, because so much sacrifice went into achieving that independence and because they looked ahead to a brighter future for Albania and its people.

There’s something else. During those celebrations, I had a chance to learn about some of the contributions that I spoke about that the Albanian Canadian community has

made to Ontario. I even had the chance to learn a little bit more about your heritage. I think Brad Duguid and I were attending some of the same events, because I also had the opportunity to participate in an Albanian dance with Brad, with Laura and with others. I have work to do on that front.

But that, to me, is what Albanian Heritage Day is all about—what I was hearing from members of the community at those celebrations. It's about celebrating the incredibly rich history and heritage of Albanian Canadians and the Albanian people. It's about celebrating the contributions that you have made and you continue to make to our great country.

During those celebrations, Ruki taught me a phrase that I want to repeat today in Albanian that she said captured what people are feeling on this day. She said: "Jam krenar qe jam Shqipëtar." To me, that is what the community felt last year, when we've celebrated in the past with Mr. Duguid, with Ms. Albanese, and that's what Laura Albanese's bill is all about. It's about being proud to be Albanian.

Today, I look forward to the passage of this bill. I look forward to celebrating with you in the years to come not just your heritage and culture, not just the contributions you've made in the past to our great country, but the contributions of the future. Falemenderit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to support my colleague from York South–Weston's Bill 145. I want to thank her for her leadership in championing this particular heritage month, but more importantly, her history lesson to us today about where the country is located. We just celebrated this afternoon Greek Independence Day at Queen's Park. Recently, this House also passed a Tamil Heritage Month. So there is lots to be proud of, lots we should be celebrating.

The member from York South–Weston talked very eloquently this afternoon about why we need this particular bill. As a former public school trustee for the Toronto District School Board, by highlighting the contributions of the Albanians in our community, whether it is in the political environment, the education, the workforce or the economic piece—there's a portion of the bill. I'm going to read it out again. I know the member from York South–Weston talked about it: "Albanian Heritage Month is an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about Ontario's rich history."

This is absolutely important, because we have young people who are here today. Moving forward, how great is this province if we continue to celebrate other people's heritage, but our own Albanian children are not remembering their own rich history, their own language, their own story?

1420

I'm a Chinese Canadian, English is my second language and I'm very proud of my Chinese heritage. But more importantly, every child should be remembering their history and their roots. They should be encouraged

to celebrate, because we have data right now in the school boards that if you protect the mother language, your child will be more successful in life.

I want to say thank you to the Albanian community here for sharing your history with us, but, more importantly, for your contribution to this great province—the best province in Canada.

To my colleague from York Southwest, thank you for your leadership in bringing this forward. I think we deserve to celebrate this, all of us. Let's move this to third reading, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for York South–Weston has two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to begin by thanking all the members who have spoken to this bill today: the member from Thornhill, the member from Niagara Falls, the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure and member from Scarborough Centre, the member from Etobicoke Centre and the member from Scarborough–Agincourt.

I know there would have been other MPPs who wanted to contribute to the debate. They are unfortunately busy with other duties that they have as MPPs, but I am very happy and pleased that we are finding the support, as you saw and heard from the various speeches that we heard today, of all the different parties here to help proclaim November as Albanian Heritage Month.

Again, we heard how important it is to celebrate one's traditions, one's history and one's culture, but also the future—how important it is for the new generations to learn how all of us as Ontarians have come from different parts of the world and make up the wonderful multicultural mosaic that Canada is.

I want to again thank the Albanian Canadian Community Association and Dr. Ruki Kondaj and Ramazan Kellezi, who are here—everyone who has taken the time. I know there are people here from different parts of Ontario—from Ottawa, from Hamilton, from London—who are here for this bill.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will end by saying:

"Jam krenar qe jam Shqipëtar."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. We will take the vote on this particular private member's bill at the end of our private members' business this afternoon.

RAE LUCKOCK AND AGNES MACPHAIL

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I move that, in the opinion of this House, to recognize the important contribution of women to Ontario's history and to acknowledge the need for greater representation of women in politics, two statues honouring Rae Luckock and Agnes Macphail, the first two women elected to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, should be erected on the grounds of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Madame Lalonde has moved private member's notice of motion number 64. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, before I start my speech, I just quickly want to acknowledge the presence of several guests. I will just point to our gallery here. I want to say thank you to all the women, and the children, who are here to support my motion. It means a lot to me and I'm very humbled. But I need to recognize two individuals, one in particular, Dr. Jean Augustine, who introduced a similar motion to honour the Famous Five on Parliament Hill, and Lloyd Luckock, who is the grandson of one of the two MPPs I'm going to talk to you about this afternoon. Welcome to our Legislature. Everyone else, welcome and thank you.

As I said, it's an honour to stand here today to talk about this motion that will honour two very important legislators in Ontario's cities. The road to equality for women has not been easy nor short and, most importantly, it is far from over. My motion is just one piece on the broader road to equality.

This month is Women's History Month, and there could not be a more appropriate month to highlight the lives of two incredible women who broke the glass ceiling and were tireless crusaders for women's equality. The motion I've brought forth today seeks to recognize the significant contributions of our first female MPPs, Rae Luckock and Agnes Macphail.

There are many of you in this House who know about Agnes Macphail. She was, after all, our first female MP elected. In comparison to her counterpart, Rae Luckock is largely omitted from Ontario history, so I would like to start by sharing a little bit of her story.

Rae Luckock and Agnes Macphail were both elected in Ontario's general election in 1943. Both of them represented the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and held Toronto ridings: Luckock represented Bracondale, while Macphail represented York East.

Luckock served one term as MPP from 1943 to 1945. During her time in this chamber, she was a champion for women, advocating that women should be able to stay in the working world when the men came home from the war. She was also a strong environmentalist trailblazer through her inquiries into the effect of air pollution, Mr. Speaker.

In 1945, she was unfortunately unable to achieve re-election. This was largely due to Cold War anxiety, which saw her being accused of communist affiliation, which ultimately led to her defeat.

Luckock rose from this fall stronger and more determined to further the cause of women. She was the head of the Housewives and Consumers Association and a prominent member of the organization far beyond her term. In 1948, she led the March of a Million Names on Parliament Hill, in which she led the fight for reasonable prices for consumer goods. Much like the name says, Rae had gathered a petition of one million names and presented it directly to Prime Minister Mackenzie King.

The march succeeded, and the federal government did take some action against milling and baking companies who artificially fixed the price of bread.

In the early 1950s, the Housewives and Consumers Association joined with other women's groups to become the Congress of Canadian Women, and Rae Luckock was elected its first president. The congress was involved in the global peace movement in the 1950s and invited a cultural exchange between the people of the Soviet Union and Canada.

Rae travelled the world to attend the World Peace Council, including one hosted in China in 1956. Due to her travel to the People's Republic of China in the 1950s, she was barred entry to America. But being a tireless crusader, she argued for this ban to be lifted, and it actually was.

Unfortunately, Rae's fighting spirit was reduced when she was diagnosed with Parkinson's, and she spent the last decade of her life in a hospital, passing away in 1971.

But I'm glad to help start the conversation to restore Rae's legacy, and it's an even more special day because we have her grandson here, as I mentioned to you, Mr. Speaker—again, thank you to Lloyd—to represent the Luckock clan. So thank you very much.

Agnes Macphail had the honour of being the first female MPP in Ontario. She was also our first female MP in Canada who represented Grey-Bruce. She also served a second term as an MPP beginning in 1948 to 1951. The capstone of her political career can be said to be the 1951 equal pay bill that she introduced, a first in Ontario and a significant milestone on our journey of women's rights.

Much has been done to honour this distinguished female political figure, including the establishment of March 24 as Agnes Macphail Day in her former East York. I have to say that it's actually her birthday today. So, today, I wish Agnes a happy birthday from all of us here in this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy that I'm able to highlight the extensive careers of these two women and the enormous contribution they have made. I want to spend some time in my speech to talk about these two women because, all too often in our history—we were having this conversation—they're not there. They almost do not exist, or, as we mentioned earlier, they're in a children's library section here in Ontario. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy that this will hopefully change that concept of the history of our two first female MPPs.

1430

I thought it was also important that we discuss Rae. As I mentioned before, Agnes is well known. In fact, she is well known enough that there is a bust of her on the grand staircase. Yet Rae's legacy has been overshadowed, and it was time to restore her place in Ontario's history.

We should also recognize that Ontario does have some milestones to be proud of. One unique story in this province is the story of the first woman to seek a seat at Queen's Park and possibly the first woman in the British Empire to seek a seat at a provincial or federal level.

Margaret Haile became the Socialist candidate for the riding of Toronto North in 1902. Her nomination to be the Socialist party's candidate was accepted. Despite the fact that women actually did not have the right to vote, or even take a seat at Queen's Park at the time, she managed to take 1% of the votes. She was the forerunner of the suffragette movement in this province, and another female trailblazer we should remember in this province.

In 1943, of course, we elected our first female MPPs, Rae Luckock and Agnes Macphail. The first female PC elected in this House was Margaret Birch, elected in 1971, and she also became the first female cabinet minister in 1972. The first Liberal member was Margaret Campbell, elected in 1973.

Over the decades, this chamber has slowly become more representative. After the 2014 election, there were 38 female MPPs in this chamber, which represented a record-breaking 35.5% of this House.

Applause.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Yes, 2014, our year. That marks a significant change from just 15 years prior, in the 1999 election, when females were only 17% of this Legislature. We've also seen the first francophone woman elected here, Claudette Boyer, and the first francophone female Attorney General, the Honourable Madeleine Meilleur.

Our Premier, Kathleen Wynne, currently one of three female Premiers in this country, became the first woman Premier in 2013, alongside a Deputy Premier. The leader of the third party is also a woman, and more than half of the NDP caucus is female.

All this being said, we still must pursue the journey to equality and realize that for many minority women in this province, the journey is even further. While today we are recognizing the first two female MPPs elected to this chamber, we should also reflect upon the fact that aboriginal women did not get the right to vote until 1960. These women were long disenfranchised. Even when they received the right to vote, the Prime Minister at the time, Diefenbaker, did not properly conduct nation-to-nation consultation.

We must be at the forefront of encouraging women to enter politics. This House is still not close to a gender level that reflects the population we represent. Therefore, we must continue working towards the goal of equal gender representation.

Mr. Speaker, these statues not only represent the hard work and dedication of two political figures, but the long path ahead for women. It is not enough for public discourse to become familiarized with the contributions of women like Rae Luckock and Agnes Macphail. Rather, it is essential that we have physical, visible depictions on the legislative grounds, not only for the sole purpose of sight-seeing, but for the cementing of the idea that women's contributions and hard work are just as worthy as those of the men.

These statues are an embodiment of that worthiness, appreciation and, most importantly, recognition. Members, you can see that these two statues are not just a

mere embodiment of the work of these two; these statues are symbols of the road to equality for women and their equal representation in politics and all walks of life.

I stand here today in honour of the women who remain steadfast in the fight for justice, equality and representation. These are the women who have paved the way for me and for other females, our colleagues here in this House, to courageously pursue a political path. It is because of their dedication to furthering the cause of equality for women that I'm able to stand here today.

The road to equality and representation for women is long, but what makes any journey worthwhile are the little achievements along the way which further that cause. The power of change lies in the little steps taken at the right time, in the right place. It is great to see that many here understand that it is undeniably just that: a necessary step in the direction of full and equal representation for women.

Agnes Macphail said—and I'll end by saying—"I want for myself what I want for other women: absolute equality." In light of those words, I hope that everyone here will support this bill. In doing so, we are making the dream of those women a reality. With this, we are one step closer to an equal and equitable Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to the private member's initiative from the member for Ottawa—Orléans. It is indeed an honour, and I congratulate her for having the history and the commitment and the heart all embraced into one initiative that encapsulates what women are all about in Legislatures across Canada.

I say that because I represent Ontario with the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians. It's a steering committee whereby we get together and we talk about how we can encourage more women to get involved at all levels of government. I really applaud you for doing this, and certainly we'll be talking about your initiative at our next steering committee. It's good news.

We have to do more in terms of ensuring equality for all people. I think your initiative today doesn't just outline why we need to recognize two amazing women who, in your words, broke the glass ceiling, but lays the path for recognizing equality for all people. For that, I congratulate you as well.

I also would like to share with you that it's an extension of what we already have at Queen's Park. There was an amazing vision a few years ago where a remarkable assembly was developed on the first floor for all of the public to view. I congratulate the Clerk's office and Speaker Levac specifically for investing in an opportunity to celebrate women in Ontario who have made a difference. The next natural step to your private member's initiative is to recognize the ladies who have laid down the bricks on that path: Agnes Macphail and Mrs. Luckock.

It's great to see family members here to realize and celebrate what your great-grandmother stood for. I think

that when we have a bust or a monument that recognizes what women achieved decades ago, it will remind us of more people and more women who need to be celebrated as well. I say this with all sincerity.

In particular, I really admire you. You're lucky. You're lucky to be here to see your great-grandmother recognized, and I thank you for taking the time to come in to Toronto today.

I'd also like to give a shout-out to the family of Agnes Macphail. Yes, she grew up in Grey county, and I know the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is very proud of that as well, but there's a dotted line back to Bruce county, so I'm just going to slide that in. Upon graduation from school, Agnes Macphail first started teaching outside of Port Elgin, and then she proceeded to teach school just outside of my hometown of Teeswater, in Kinloss.

It was during her tenure as a teacher in Kinloss that she started speaking from her heart, as I referred to earlier. And in speaking from her heart amongst farmers, business people and people who realized, most importantly, her natural sense of what's right and that natural fire in her belly to make a difference—they encouraged her. The community at home encouraged her to move forward. You outlined her path very nicely, both at the Hill and here at Queen's Park. I really think that's admirable.

1440

We want to support this because I know that someday, when we look at your memorial out on the lawn somewhere, when we look at Agnes and Mrs. Luckock, we are going to think of other women. I'll just get a little plug in here as well. Some of you who have been here for a while might recall that I grew up with a municipal office in my home until I was a teenager. My mom was one of the first or second female clerks in the county of Huron.

When we look at a monument recognizing two amazing women from decades ago, I think it's also going to encourage all of us, and young women who come to Queen's Park, to think about their own mentors and how they might be able to shape their own path in making a difference. I thank you and we support this wholeheartedly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's great to have an opportunity to get up and talk about Rae Luckock and Agnes Macphail, who were political trailblazers, organizers and activists at a time in this country when it wasn't acceptable for women to be so. Both elected to the provincial Legislature at the same time, Rae stepped aside to let Macphail actually be sworn in first, as the first woman, because of all the work that she had done around issues here in the province. Agnes was the first woman to ever be elected as an MP in the same year that women got the right to vote in this country. What an amazing feat. I think it was 1926.

Anyway, that election year was a major breakthrough for the CCF, as well, in Ontario, propelling them to the

official opposition with 34 seats. In the Legislature, Rae served in many capacities but, as the education critic, she promoted the idea of free university tuition and improved rural education. She championed equality for women by advocating for equal pay for equal work and pay for homemakers, something that we are still fighting for 73 years later.

Macphail's activism around women led to the Elizabeth Fry Society. She championed rights for seniors and she was the first woman ever to be elected as a delegate to the League of Nations in Geneva. And although we have come a ways forward and although we support this motion to erect these statues here at Queen's Park, I don't think that we can move forward unless we acknowledge some of the realities that still exist here in Ontario and across this country.

I'd argue that current realities don't pay justice to these two great women. The reality is that we still have a gender wage gap present, a 30% gender wage gap. We still have underfunding to public agencies here in Ontario. That means that pay equity has never been achieved, even though pay equity legislation was introduced back in 1987. We still have a 30% wage pay gap and generally, too, some of the lowest-paid workers in this province. Those people who work in home care, who work in developmental services and who work in day care have never achieved pay equity because their agencies don't have the funding to actually get there.

While I appreciate the member's bill, I think that there are still issues around precarious work, and precarious work may affect women more than men—part-time work and contract work. The government still has a lot of work to do around issues under the Employment Standards Act, where women are not being paid as they should be paid even under minimum wage situations. There needs to be a lot of work done around the Employment Standards Act and a lot of work done around the Labour Relations Act so that it is made easier for women and men in precarious work to unionize and have a voice so that they can collectively bargain in this province.

The statues are a good thing. I think the government also could turn its mind to using a gender lens sometimes in their budget deliberations to make sure that we're looking at how budget decisions actually impact on women in this province. I think that's what we would be hearing from Agnes and from Rae, that although things have moved along, they move along far too slowly, and they would want to see things move along much quicker here in the province of Ontario.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak to this issue. I welcome the family here today; we're happy to have you here.

I'll leave a couple of minutes on the clock for my friend from Parkdale-High Park.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I am delighted to be able to rise today to speak to our member for Ottawa-Orléans' motion to honour two great women by having statues

erected on the lawn of Queen's Park. I actually do congratulate her; this is a wonderful statement. When you think about the statues around Queen's Park, they're almost universally male, except for one, Queen Victoria.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You have to be an old queen—

Mr. Arthur Potts: You have to be a queen and not just a male queen. Thank you.

I have a great picture of the blossoms in front of Queen's Park with Queen Victoria looking through them, somewhat amused I thought, at these wonderful blossoms.

I want to start by saying I believe that symbols are extraordinarily important. We have an opportunity in the foyer, as we walk into this House every day. As I walk up here, I see a bust of Agnes Macphail, and I smile at it every day that I go by. I smile at it particularly because she represented the riding I currently represent, and it brings a little history back to me.

In fact, Speaker, it's a bit of history that I share with the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, because it was from his riding that she was first elected an MP in 1921, so he and I share that history. Although at the time she represented different parties than both of us, we share the history of her being involved. So these symbols are very important.

Also, statues are important. The Adam Beck statue: It's a family story of ours that my father went with my mother on a date and walked her over to Adam Beck's statue where he proposed to her. It's always been part of the folklore of our family that my father proposed to my mother, and I wonder why he would propose in front of the founder of Niagara Falls and such. Maybe she was electrifying; I'm not sure what his rationale was. But something we've always had in the family is that statue. Maybe some inspired women might find the opportunity to join themselves in matrimony around a statue at Queen's Park, if we were to have that.

Agnes Macphail's birthday is today. Many years ago, the province of Ontario recognized March 24 as Agnes Macphail Day in Ontario. Tonight, I have the pleasure of going to the East York Civic Centre, where we're celebrating the Agnes Macphail Award. Patrick Rocca is a local real estate agent who has done yeoman service in East York for underprivileged people. He represents the Thorncliffe breakfast program for underprivileged students in that community, the Maurice Cody Dirt to Turf Project and the New Circles Flemingdon project.

I spoke briefly about this on Monday in a member's statement, but I'm honoured to be able to go there this evening. There will be a historian—I think it's Alan Redway, in fact, an ex-mayor of East York and previous winner of the Agnes Macphail Award himself—who will be doing a short history of the life of Agnes Macphail tonight in advance of giving Mr. Rocca his award. I'm very excited that we're going to do that and that we can celebrate.

I don't have a lot of background knowledge of Ms. Luckock. Rae was elected at the same time, and I think

the member from Welland was mentioning that Agnes Macphail had the history as the first MPP only because she was called up first to be sworn. Technically, they were both elected at the same time, although Agnes Macphail was sworn in first, which is why we can say she was the first MPP elected to Queen's Park. But in no way does that diminish the very important moment that for the first time two women were elected to this Legislature.

I'm delighted to be able to stand and support this. It reflects so well in my community. Maybe it's two statues or maybe it's one statue of the two of them together, hand in hand at Queen's Park; I don't know. I'm looking forward to maybe having artists put forward their proposals to see what it will look like. But the fact that we can recognize it on the lawn at Queen's Park is extremely important, and I thank the member for bringing forward her motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm also pleased to speak to the motion before us today to create a monument commemorating Ontario's first two female MPPs, Agnes Macphail and Rae Luckock. I welcome all our guests here today for this momentous occasion, and I congratulate the member from Ottawa-Orléans for bringing this forward.

1450

The first two women were elected to this chamber in 1943. It's a very significant historical event and we should honour those two women. They were to champion increased awareness and education for representation of women in politics, which we, as women in the Legislature—I think we're at 36% now? Yes. So, hey—sorry for the delay, but we're getting there.

We still champion a lot of the same issues that those two women fought for. Agnes Macphail was also elected to the House of Commons and then became a well-known politician, writer and speaker. It is her birthday today, which is very significant. It's funny how things can work out that way. So good for you.

She did come from humble beginnings, that were mentioned earlier, from Bruce county. She had strong opinions about equality and was outspoken about human rights and feminism. Just to note, she defeated 10 men in 1921 for that nomination. And let me tell you, in 1921, I'm sure there was a little bit of intolerance towards her gender. So well done, Agnes.

She carried the riding with a majority, so the people within the riding, once she got through that nomination, respected and honoured her talent. In 1921, I believe, there were four women who contested that whole federal election in Canada, and she was the only successful candidate—just another great part of history.

She campaigned on currency reform. She had an interest in prison reform and, because of her compassion, the Archambault commission investigated the shocking stories of mistreatment in Canada's prisons and stories of discrimination against former convicts, and a personal-

ized copy was presented to her. I believe there was a commercial that commemorated Agnes and showed her in the House of Commons, and which signified what she had done for prison reform.

She both participated in the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and was the first Canadian woman to be a delegate to the League of Nations—lots of milestones that we all admire today.

Rae Luckock was politically active during the time when the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation was founded. I think the death of her daughter sparked her desire to push for political action. I know there are family members here today, so I apologize for the pronunciation there. She became active in 1932 and won election, after several hard-fought battles, in 1943.

She supported access to education, especially in rural areas of the province, which I can say we still fight for. She raised environmental issues and pushed for the voting age to be reduced to 18 so that more young people could be engaged in the democratic process.

She also championed the fight for extending workers' compensation to homemakers. She said the famous quote: "The rearing of children and caring for the home must be recognized as work of inestimable value to the state."

Apart from the statue outside of Queen Victoria, there are no other monuments for historical female figures on the grounds of the Legislature. So to both these inspiring women, I say it's time to put the statues out front.

Thank you for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour to stand. Agnes, when she was heckled in the House—she was heckled one day by a man who said, "Oh, just get a husband." Her response immediately was, "And if I married him, how do I know he wouldn't turn out like you?"

When I was first elected 10 years ago, I remember saying over and over again to school groups and others who came here: "There are only two women depicted on the public floors of the so-called Pink Palace. One of them is the Queen and the other is Agnes Macphail." I have a little superstitious thing I do, which is, whenever I walk past Agnes's bust, I rub her shoulder. One shoulder is a little shinier than the other right now, after 10 years.

These two women were remarkable women, and I absolutely support this and commend the member from Ottawa—Orléans for bringing it forward. This is the time to do this—past the time to do this.

International Women's Day just passed. Fifty years ago, when I was a kid, I marched on International Women's Day and I marched for three key things: universal, paid-for child care; control over our own bodies; and equal pay for equal work. We still don't have child care 50 years later. We still don't have equal pay for equal work. And sadly, with the Ghomeshi response this afternoon, we don't even have control over our own bodies. I just had to throw that in there, because I will go to that demonstration later too. That would be in the spirit of Agnes and Rae.

The other thing that I find interesting this afternoon—and touching, really—is that we have a Liberal bill, supported by every party in the House here, for two adamant socialists. They were, Mr. Speaker; they were radical socialists, these two women.

When you look at the CCF, the Canadian Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, which was the precursor to the NDP, the Regina Manifesto starts off, "We aim to replace the present capitalist system, with its inherent injustice and inhumanity, by a social order from which the domination and exploitation of one class by another will be eliminated...."

Those words sound radical today, but imagine what they sounded like back then, and imagine them coming out of the mouths of two women. That's amazing. When you look at Rae—she went to China. She couldn't go into the United States after that; she was considered an enemy of the state. She was declared a Communist, and that was the end of that.

Agnes had the same reaction. Agnes had some great quotes, and I'm going to share them with you, but one of them which isn't normally known—I didn't know about this one; I just looked it up—was upon her election: "I was intensely unhappy. Some of the members resented my intrusion. Others jeered at me. Everything I said was wrong ... everything I did was wrong.... The men did not want me in Parliament...." There were no other women there. Imagine how lonely and awful that experience must have been. It's inconceivable to us today, really, no matter what we face.

Of course, my favourite quote is the most famous of hers, which is, "Never apologize, never explain—just get the thing done and let them howl." I love that.

When I speak in feminist surroundings to women's groups, I always start off by saying that I'm the first woman born in my family as a human person, and that's because my mother was born pre-1928 and pre- the Famous Five. The response is, "Where were you born?" and I say "Canada, and so were my mother and grandmother." Think about how far we've come, Mr. Speaker, from those days.

This is a chance truly to celebrate the achievements of our mothers and grandmothers, and what they did for us. Back in the 1960s, there were quotas on how many women engineers and doctors could go to the University of Toronto. That was in the 1960s. That wasn't that long ago. I grew up in an era of "Help Wanted: Male" and "Help Wanted: Female." All of this we've seen overturned.

As my colleague from Welland said, of course there's still so much more room to grow and places to achieve, and Rae and Agnes would be the first to stand here and say that. In fact, I think they'll haunt us if we don't put on pressure to achieve child care, for example, or wage parity, for another example, and of course to look at things through a gendered lens.

Here are some other quotes by Agnes Macphail: "I owed it to my father that I was elected to Parliament in the first place, but I owed it to my mother that I stuck it out once I got there."

This one is quite lovely: “Whatever is dirty, it is women’s job to clean up ... and that goes for everything, from cellar to Senate.”

You just have to admire the feistiness of these two women. I love the thought of having statues to them out front. I think that would be absolutely wonderful.

We’ve experienced so many firsts, we who are lucky enough to be alive in this era, but what would be wonderful—I loved the member speaking about this—is that these would become, just like the Famous Five on Parliament Hill, points of pilgrimage for many women in other countries who wish they could achieve what we’ve achieved, and for women all across our own country to really reinforce our history. What’s so important is that now our daughters and our granddaughters remember. We need to leave a legacy for them.

I just want to remind folks that on April 12—I see that Equal Voice is in the House—we will be having Girls’ Government here. The Girls’ Government girls will be coming down to Queen’s Park. These girls are fired up about politics, Mr. Speaker. We don’t have statues yet to gather around, but I’m telling you that we will gather around the bust of Agnes Macphail, and all those smaller hands than mine will rub her shoulder for good luck—maybe a little bit out of superstition, but also out of great hope that next year or the year after, we’ll be standing in front of a statue to do that, which would be great, but, more to the point, that we will see in our lifetime 50% of this whole House be women.

1500

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I’m pleased to recognize the Associate Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: It’s my honour to rise in this House today to support the motion that was put forward by my colleague the member for Ottawa–Orléans. I want to begin by applauding her leadership in bringing forward this very important and timely motion. The motion would see the creation of an important monument that would honour the memory and contributions of the first two female MPPs, Rae Luckock and Agnes Macphail, elected in 1943.

These women were trailblazers. Let’s consider the world in 1943. The war was going on. Women were fighting for the right to work outside the home. The fight for gender equality had only just begun to get traction. Against this backdrop, these strong women took up the call to service. They put their names forward to represent their communities in Toronto ridings and won.

Too often throughout history, the stories and contributions of women are overlooked. These women are political legends whose stories should be celebrated. I can think of no better place to honour their memory than on the grounds of the Legislature.

Earlier today, I was walking by an exhibit on the second floor of the legislative building that showcased the political history and the faces here in Ontario. While the exhibit highlighted prominent stories for Ontario, what was noticeably absent were the images and faces of women. We know women were there, but their contribu-

tions were overshadowed. They were silent. It’s time we change that here in Ontario. It’s time to give presence to women’s contributions.

I’m proud to be part of a government under the leadership of our great Premier, the first woman to lead this province. It’s through her leadership that we, as a government, promote gender equality. We’re taking practical steps to improve the lives of women and girls across the province. As part of that effort, we need to start doing more to ensure that the history we tell reflects the voices and the experiences of women. Creating this monument is an important step towards achieving that.

When students from my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood come to visit Queen’s Park, I want them to be able to see how this House and our political history in Ontario have been shaped by women.

Mr. Speaker, passing this motion in 2016 is particularly symbolic. This year marks the 100th anniversary of women in Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan being given the right to vote. In celebration of this historic milestone, the Royal Canadian Mint has created a new dollar coin which depicts a woman casting her ballot.

What better way for our government to recognize this important historic event than by passing this motion and creating a monument to celebrate Rae Luckock, Agnes Macphail and all the women since then, like the Honourable Jean Augustine and others, who have helped to shape this province and this great country and to inspire the next generation of women political leaders?

I encourage the members of this House to support this motion, and I want to thank the member from Ottawa–Orléans for her vision and insight in putting it forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I’m very pleased to rise on the member from Ottawa–Orléans’ motion to create a monument commemorating Ontario’s first two female MPPs. I’m not going to give a whole history because we’ve heard a lot about Rae Luckock—she has some family members here, and I want to welcome them—and, I guess I could say, after everything I’ve heard, her partner in crime, Agnes Macphail. They were both elected in 1943 to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and then Agnes went on to the House of Commons.

The expression is “what caught my eye,” but what caught my ear was when the member from Parkdale–High Park said—this is a quote from Agnes: “The men did not want me in Parliament.” That really brought back a memory of my late mother, who, in the 1950s, was the only woman out of over 500 men to write the chartered accountant exams in Quebec. Every now and then, she would talk about it. My mother was very petite, no taller than me, but the difference between us is, people called her a little mouse. She was very quiet. She spoke in a loud whisper. She was very good, obviously, in math, to brave that world. The men would purposely smoke around her when she was pregnant. They knew she didn’t want them to smoke around her, but they would continue to smoke around her. They were in lab rooms where there

were high stools, and they would grab the low chairs and not offer them to her—things like that. She said, “The men didn’t want me there”—because it was normally a club and it was fun for them to be there, and here was this woman coming in their midst.

I think we can all relate to these two women who came and braved a man’s world—real trailblazers.

The problem with our generation now is maybe we have it a little cushy. Maybe we don’t recognize what went on before and we don’t appreciate it. Having a statue on the lawn will remind us to remember the women who fought for what we have here. Maybe it will remind us of what’s going on in other countries, where women don’t have the opportunities we have here. Maybe it will remind us to represent some of the women’s issues.

I think women feel they’re being told every now and then, “Women have come so far and there’s almost equality. Do we really have to have women’s studies? Do we have to have women’s issues? Do we have to have International Women’s Day?” We’ve all heard those questions before. We have to not feel uncomfortable and we have to look them in the eye and say, “Yes, we do, until women have the means to have a fulfilling life and not feel guilty for it.”

Yes, it’s 36% women here in the Legislature, but we know that women who have young children are made to feel guilty. I know of somebody who went door-knocking once in a campaign and was asked, “Who is going to take care of your children?” She was depressed. She asked me, “What would you have said?” She knew I had the quick answers. I told her that I would have said, “Well, I certainly hope you say that to every man who comes knocking at the door.”

I think that it would be wonderful to have those statues, just because it would remind us not just of the two women but of what they braved, what we have here and what more we have to achieve here in Ontario and the rest of the world.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: As I catch my breath here, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to speak on private member’s notice of motion 64. I want to commend my colleague the member from Ottawa–Orléans for bringing forth this motion.

As a female MPP elected to this Legislature, I cannot be more honoured and proud to support the member’s motion, which proposes to create two statues depicting Ontario’s first two female MPPs, Margarette Rae Morrison Luckock, better known as Rae Luckock, and Agnes Campbell Macphail.

I am proud and honoured to recognize the contribution of these two women who helped shape Ontario’s history, and am proud to advocate for the installation of two statues in their honour.

These would be the first statues of historical women from Ontario on the grounds of the Legislature. Several monuments exist across Canada, in significant numbers,

to honour famous women, including on Parliament Hill, at the Manitoba Legislature and l’Assemblée nationale in Quebec.

1510

Rae Luckock and Agnes Macphail deserve to be recognized for their bravery. They stood up for what they believed in and encouraged women to be more engaged in the political process. Rae Luckock and Agnes Macphail were both elected in Ontario’s 1943 general election. They were the first women elected to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

New MPPs were usually sworn in in alphabetical order. As such, Rae Luckock was supposed to be the first woman ever sworn in as MPP, but she deferred to Agnes Macphail in recognition of Agnes Macphail’s long career as a federal MP. Rae Luckock was, therefore, the second woman to take the MPP oath.

Although largely forgotten in history due to the fact that she was accused of being a communist, Miss Luckock was a proud social activist who eventually would found the Congress of Canadian Women in 1950. In the Legislature, she advocated for causes such as free university tuition and improved rural education. She also championed the equality of women by advocating for equal pay for equal work. Many of these issues are still discussed today within the Ontario Legislature. I’m honoured to work with my colleagues—along with our Premier, Kathleen Wynne—as Miss Luckock did, to bring more women into politics, and to educate and empower future generations of women politicians.

This motion is especially important for me, as Rae Luckock was elected as the member for the riding of Bracondale. Bracondale is an area which is now part of my own riding of Davenport. As the first female MPP for Davenport, I feel a special connection with former MPP Luckock.

Upon approval, I’ll be happy to bring news of this private member’s motion to all the women in Davenport and to all my constituents. I will be especially proud to share this with Leading Women/Leading Girls in my neighbourhood, as well as the 15 girls from schools in Davenport participating in this year’s Girls’ Government. I want to show them that they, just as Rae Luckock did, can stand up for what they believe is right and that they can step into the shoes of trail-blazing women in politics, like Rae Luckock, Agnes Macphail and our very own Premier Kathleen Wynne, the first woman to serve as Premier in Ontario.

As a female MPP, I feel it is our collective duty, as members of provincial Parliament, to support this private member’s notice of motion, and I thank the member for Ottawa–Orléans for bringing it forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa–Orléans has two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I’m going to try to wrap this up as quickly as my two minutes allow.

I want to say thank you very much to all my colleagues in this House—the members from Huron–Bruce, Welland, Beaches–East York, Parkdale–High Park,

Davenport, the Associate Minister of Finance, and the member from Thornhill—to have raised and brought forward those very important aspects of why—and thank you in advance a little bit, but most likely, for unanimous consent. I'm very happy that, Jean, it may be a little bit less difficult than it was for you, but it is still an important chapter that hopefully we'll be passing later on.

I also want to say thank you very much to several organizations that are here today and all the women and children who are joining me for this important motion. I know there were a lot of quotations and people giving their perspectives and their support, and I want to make sure we're recognizing you today:

—Nancy Coldham, co-chair of Equal Voice Toronto;

—Carolyn Robertson, chair of the Famous 5 Foundation;

—Mary Potter, president of the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario;

—Lois Volk, president of the Canadian Association of Women Executives and Entrepreneurs.

In my hometown of Ottawa, where I used to be a social worker, a former colleague of mine, from the association of social work, sent me a very nice note.

I wouldn't be myself if I was not able to recognize them—and, last but not least, the Business and Professional Women's Clubs of Ontario, which have shown support.

This is the beginning, I hope, of what will be an education for all Ontarians about the role of women in politics. The first two female MPPs elected in this Legislature, in my opinion, should be having a bigger presence and also having a chance to be reflected upon as groups and students come forward. Merci, monsieur le Président. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We will vote on this motion after we finish the next private member's ballot item.

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO
ILLEGAL TRADE AND TRAFFICKING
OF PEOPLE, DRUGS, MONEY, TOBACCO
AND WEAPONS ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 CONCERNANT
LA COMMISSION D'ENQUÊTE SUR
LE COMMERCE ET LE TRAFIC ILLICITES
DE PERSONNES, DE DROGUES,
D'ARGENT, DE TABAC ET D'ARMES

Mr. Barrett moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 162, An Act to establish a commission of inquiry into illegal trade and trafficking of people, drugs, money, tobacco and weapons / Projet de loi 162, Loi visant la création d'une commission d'enquête sur le commerce et le trafic illicites de personnes, de drogues, d'argent, de tabac et d'armes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his

presentation. I recognize the member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Part of this started last spring. In my tobacco country constituency office down in Simcoe, I received visits from a Guatemalan film crew, as well as a documentary crew from Costa Rica. Both asked the same question: “Why are our countries inundated with contraband tobacco from Ontario?”

Then, last fall, I had a visit from Mexico City's Reforma newspaper, another film crew. They were tracking the sources of Ontario-grown illegal tobacco entering Mexico after their government had increased taxes on smokes.

During the interviews, I had little to offer about the distribution channels and the identity of the players. It's something you really don't want to talk about. I did have questions of my own: If containers are used to smuggle a local product to Latin America, what's coming back up in return? How does money change hands outside of normal banking and trading relationships? What organizations are local traffickers dealing with in countries like Mexico and Guatemala? What else is being moved back and forth across borders as part of our local black market in tobacco and other products?

A gentleman named Ed Myers, former editor of FrontLine Security Magazine, was kind enough to fly up from North Carolina to support the launch of this private member's bill calling for an inquiry into the illegal trade and trafficking of people, drugs, money, tobacco and weapons. During the Queen's Park news conference, Ed Myers said, “All smuggling-related crimes are interconnected—organized crime networks that are used to smuggle contraband tobacco are the same as the ones with the same criminals who are running drugs, weapons or humans to fuel more serious crimes or fund terrorist attacks.”

Speaker, Ed Myers and I will be addressing the May conference of the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards.

To adequately examine the phenomenon of trafficking and the black market within the context of a changing world, this commission would rely not only on information and opinions of scientists and experts, but also on candid opinions, attitudes and experiences of knowledgeable individuals who are out there in the province and beyond. It would recommend solutions to reduce the scope of the problem with respect to black market activity.

The legislation mandates the commission to be time-limited and requires an interim report in six months, a final report in 12 months—the final report to be made public within 10 days after it's submitted to the Lieutenant Governor.

The commission, through this legislation, would be created or designed to conduct an inquiry and certainly not an inquisition. It will attempt to deal with issues that bear on a variety of social and legislative policies that should be adopted toward both domestic and international trafficking of the various sectors I've been referring to.

The commission will look at existing laws and enforcement. The commission will report conclusions and make recommendations to our Ontario government concerning legislative and other initiatives.

I've come to realize that all smuggling-related crimes seem to be interconnected. A lot of the same players organize crime networks. They're used to smuggle contraband tobacco, oftentimes the same ones that are running drugs, that are running weapons, dealing in trafficking with people, and that are often involved in more serious crimes. And, as I've been told, it's an avenue as well to fund terrorist attacks.

1520

I do stress that Ontario's black market continues to grow not only in scope but also in sophistication. Ontario is a major hub, as we have heard for months now, with respect to human trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Cocaine, amphetamines, heroin and other narcotic analgesics have long been financed by organized groups. Cash is king. We now see money laundering as well through online gambling, e-commerce, bitcoin and contraband tobacco. Read the budget: 30%, I'm told even 40%, of taxes are lost to the illegal trade, and all of this is permeated by the market in illegal weapons.

The crime is organized. My question this morning in the House was, does this government feel that we have a society that's suitably up to date? Are we organized to fight back?

I point out that Ontario does not have a strategy for human trafficking. The same can be said for tobacco, and the same can be said for drugs and illegal weapons. There's a lack of data; there's a lack of statistics. We do have task forces. This is all to the good. There's various ad hoc initiatives, but there's a lack of information sharing, a lack of collaboration among these various groups that are fighting the criminal underworld.

My second question this morning: Is this government willing to establish a time-limited inquiry, research-based, drawing on fact and expert testimony, to review the literature, assemble the necessary knowledge and the understanding, to explore best practices and, again, provide advice for future action? Because I feel the future may not bode well for our province of Ontario, given the nature of much of this global activity. It is becoming more complex. It's much more sophisticated in magnitude and scale. It requires innovation in return and continually updated approaches.

It requires help from the public. No single entity can deal with what's on the other side. Additional research, of course, is always required, and evidence-based, effective policy. To this end, I maintain that an inquiry would help fill the void where we are lacking.

Regrettably, I see this in my riding in an ever-increasing way. Crime groups can pervade all parts of our society, all parts of our daily life, clearly a threat to any concept of peace, order and good government. Information sharing, intelligence sharing, not only within the province but with other jurisdictions—the federal government; the US; Europe; I think of Italy, for example—is so important for public safety.

The stakeholders have a tough row to hoe. Resources can be lacking and coordination can be lacking as well. I'm not advocating a silver bullet. There's no single policy, instrument or initiative to overcome the myriad challenges that we see here and the dynamics, but we do require a concerted effort. We have government for a reason, based on a strategic vision, as opposed to what may be seen as a bit of a hodgepodge of ad hoc, at times feel-good efforts.

As time goes on, we know the recent task force with respect to women offered two approaches: There was one page in the report on trafficking to coordinate help and allow support services to work with the criminal justice system—again, to collaborate; and secondly, it recommended that Ontario “develop a multi-ministerial, province-wide strategy on human trafficking”—the most common form of trafficking. Again, sex for customers, and again, no strategy. Much of this remains poorly understood; I think a lot of work has been done recently.

Addiction to drugs, another topic I cover, leads to other crimes to fund the need for drugs, the addiction: break-ins, robberies and, oftentimes, the worst-case scenario, murder. Drugs fuel gang activity. Drugs can lead to prostitution. Trade in drugs—the list I mentioned—has always been the source of income for established organized criminal groups. I will mention that any future decriminalization or legalization of cannabis, when we're lacking any reliable, quantifiable indicators or data, will make it difficult to predict the outcome.

Much of the black market economy circumvents normal banking operations. It's cash-based and has impact on corresponding safety and administrative issues. Money laundering facilitates corruption and essentially compromises the integrity of the legitimate financial system and the institutions we have. The bottom line: to provide funds for organized criminal groups that we're talking about. And it goes on: fraud, tax evasion and other criminal offences often involved with violence. I made mention of sophistication: the developing use of e-commerce, the diversification into other financial markets and opportunities to launder illegal profits and essentially obscure the money trail.

Contraband tobacco: Oftentimes, seizures have led to a trail of other drugs and firearms. Again, the financial incentives for illegal tobacco are huge. The issue of weapons, primarily automatic weapons—crime guns—is something we cannot ignore in our society.

Now, progress is being made, but we really cannot ignore this expanding domestic and international trafficking network, as I've mentioned, for people, drugs, money, tobacco and weapons. Our existing legal, institutional and societal structures seem ill-prepared. In many ways they're not organized to deal with the entity on the other side of the fence that is very clearly organized. For that reason, in my view, a broader inquiry is warranted.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: First off, in debating Bill 162, I'd like to read the explanatory note to make sure that this is what we're debating here today:

"The bill requires the Premier to recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that a commission be appointed to inquire into and report on illegal trade and trafficking of people, drugs, money, tobacco and weapons and to make recommendations, including recommendations for legislative measures, directed to the avoidance of those phenomena. Except for the deadline for submitting reports, the Public Inquiries Act, 2009 applies to the commission and the inquiry. The commission must begin its inquiry within 60 days after being appointed and must make an interim report in six months and a final report in 12 months."

I'd like to commend the member from Haldimand-Norfolk for bringing this bill forward. Speaking on behalf of my caucus, I don't purport to be an expert on any of these issues. Some of the things I have heard on these issues as an MPP in this House, I think many Ontarians would be startled by some of the issues, particularly what we've heard about human trafficking.

1530

Before I heard them in this House, I thought that was something that happens in places far away, much less developed and organized, much less law-abiding, than our society is. I was startled. I am sure that there are other things happening in this province, that are happening across the country and across the world, that we would all be startled by. We are, as legislators, in a unique position because, as unsettling as it may be, it is our responsibility not to look away. It's our responsibility to look objectively at all issues and to see the root causes behind all issues.

I'm a farmer. I would much rather talk about planting and sowing and harvesting than I would talk about these issues. But the fact of the matter is, as a legislator representing my constituents and constituencies of people across the province, we need to discuss these issues. That's why I commend the member for bringing this piece of legislation forward.

This legislation, basically, in my eyes—in our eyes—what it's looking for is more information. As someone who is right now speaking in this House of laws, I need more information. We all need more information. We need to take an objective look at the information. There are, I'm sure, experts in these fields, experts who we may have spoken to, who people may have spoken to before. I'm sure this is not the first time this issue has been looked at.

This morning, as the member asked a question of the House leader of the government, his reply was that we need to do all—I believe he was talking about human trafficking—all that we can to try to come to grips with this issue. I agree with him. Doing an inquiry is a step in that process. Is it the answer? No. Will it help us significantly approach these subjects? We don't know. The purpose is to gather information so objective decisions can be made.

This, of all issues—specifically some of the things we're talking about, like illegal trades of anything and specifically of weapons and humans—is something that

we can't play partisan politics with. We can play partisan politics with a lot of things, and they don't directly impact people's lives. But we can't—we mustn't—play partisan politics with this one. We in the NDP caucus have no intention of doing so.

This is a request for a means to gather information on issues that are not easy to talk about in our society. Quite frankly, in most cases, it's easier to look away. It's not our job to look away. It's not our job, in this case, in any case, to create issues that aren't there. But it's certainly not our job to look away from issues that could be there.

We need to find information. This is one way to do it. If this bill is passed today at second reading, it could go to committee, where the committee can look at it to see if it should be changed in some way to make it work better. That's what this debate is for: to bring it to the next step. These issues need to be looked at.

I'm not qualified to speak on these issues. These issues, to the best of my knowledge, never touched my family. I can honestly say I have never approached in my constituency offices on these issues, so I'm not going to stand here and raise my fist and do the fire-and-brimstone thing. But they're there, and they're very difficult to deal with, and today is a day when we have to make a decision on whether or not we want to spend the time to look further and to see what we can see so that we can make decisions and the government can make decisions on how to proceed further.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's my pleasure to be able to speak on this measure this afternoon, which was brought forward for the consideration of the House in the private members' public business period of time.

I want to deal with a couple of aspects of this. First of all, I had the opportunity to be Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for a period of time, and I recognize that there are many challenges that face the field of community safety. One of them is human trafficking, which we all consider to be deplorable, and which governments at all levels are making an effort to deal with.

There is a clear need, I think people would agree, for more coordination of information between local authorities, government and community organizations. Our government will be taking real steps to address human trafficking by working with those community groups that are already on the ground, working hard to combat this specific issue.

Building on the work of the select committee, we have brought together a multi-ministerial advisory panel, co-lead by Minister Naqvi and Minister MacCharles, who are working closely with experts on the front line to bring forward a comprehensive strategy. Our government also asked the violence-against-women round table co-chairs to convene a special meeting on human trafficking, to bring together the experts so we can get their advice, which I think is an appropriate step to take.

While our government is already taking an active interest and involvement in this, we recognize that there

is always more that can be done. To that end, we have initiated conversations with, for instance, the province of Manitoba, a leader in this area, to learn about the effectiveness of measures that they have put in place and to share information on the success of their overall strategy, including the legislative changes that they have implemented.

We look forward to this approach in the future. It will be responsive to the needs on the ground and it will focus on collaboration with other levels of government, community groups and justice partners. It's important to get this right, and we're bringing forward that comprehensive strategy in June.

Our government has taken significant steps in this regard. The underground economy is another thing about which I think everyone is concerned. We know that everyone wins when we have a level playing field and there is a fair share for everybody. If there isn't a level playing field, underground economy activities that expose both consumers and workers to increased risks jeopardize the health, safety and economic prosperity of Ontarians.

As reported in our last budget, we have recovered \$930 million since 2013-14, a \$330-million increase over what was reported in the 2015 budget. I think there's a consensus in the House that there's a need for that.

1540

We've taken steps to combat the underground economy, including undertaking enhanced compliance activities, enhancing the CRA's capacity to address aggressive international tax planning and ensuring businesses that work for the Ontario government meet their tax obligations. We built on that progress as a government, and those initiatives have shown some success with regards to tobacco.

What members of the Legislature should really know is that this is all about tobacco. That's what this is about this afternoon: It's about tobacco.

We have successfully delivered on a number of key initiatives in the 2015 budget, and as announced in the 2016 budget, we're taking further measures to address contraband tobacco:

- the successful implementation of raw leaf tobacco oversight;

- implementing the prescription of labelling requirements for bales and packages of raw leaf tobacco;

- a dedicated contraband tobacco enforcement team, as established by the OPP;

- the launch of four public health unit projects that will focus on seizing contraband tobacco and flavoured tobacco products; and

- proposing immediate legislative amendments that, if passed, would allow the forfeiture of raw leaf tobacco.

We recognize that this is one approach. We also recognize the approach successive governments have tried is having some success. It requires the active leadership of the federal government, as well as the province, various police agencies and First Nations.

The involvement of First Nations in this process is essential to its success, which would not be possible if our government were to proceed with actions that would be provocative in the midst of these kinds of negotiations and discussions. Ontario recognizes and respects the ceremonial value and economic development and importance of tobacco to First Nations. The progress we have achieved working with First Nations communities has been the result of a balanced and respectful approach involving partnerships and compliance activities, including discussions on self-regulation of tobacco on reserves and revenue sharing. By pushing for the strict enforcement that we have heard from time to time instead of engaging First Nations on this issue, it may well undermine the current work and progress that has been made. That's a concern that we always have.

Progress is being made in this regard. I'm hopeful there will be further progress. The government is working toward that, both at the federal and provincial levels of government. We hope to see some considerable progress as a result.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to stand today in support of my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk's Bill 162, to strike a committee to investigate and offer recommendations to combat the threat of tobacco, weapons, smuggling and human trafficking.

You heard the member for Haldimand-Norfolk's remarks. He got a lot of attention from media in Mexico, in Costa Rica and in some South American countries as well—I suspect not because of his fluent Spanish, although I know Toby has visited more countries than, I think, anybody else here in his time of travel, so he may be fluent in Spanish. It may be because of his good looks; there have been references to John Wayne from time to time, at least on this side of the floor—the Norfolk version of him. But I suspect that Mr. Barrett has become a bit of a media star in South and Central America because of the connection with his riding and with smuggling illegal tobacco and other contraband into those countries. And as he pointed out in his remarks, what comes back in those trailers and containers into our country?

I want to commend the member—because he has been on the forefront of fighting back against illegal contraband products for some time—for success in many endeavours. In others, he continues to push the existing government to take action. Hopefully, by having this committee study the issue and actually paint the truth, a real picture of what's happening, we can force further action.

I find it embarrassing that Canada now has the second-highest level of illegal, contraband tobacco, right next to El Salvador and Panama—sorry, we tie El Salvador behind Panama. It's a very dangerous statistic for us in Ontario and in Canada, and it troubles me where those dollars are actually going. The member pointed out very well that the next connection is to weapons smuggling, to

harder drugs, and then to the degradation of human smuggling and trafficking.

I think there are two reasons—I'll be very direct about this—why the situation is actually getting worse in our province. Number one is because of the veil of political correctness. I think governments and legislators are afraid to take this on because a significant degree of the black market smuggling, particularly in contraband tobacco, is going through First Nations reserves. In fact, in a recent National Post story, they said that one third of all cigarettes sold in Ontario and Quebec are coming from native reserves.

Some day in the not-too-distant future, people will look back and be shocked at how long politicians looked the other way, at how long we swept this major problem under the carpet.

It is really a soft prejudice of low expectations, that just because it happens on a First Nations reserve, some politicians will say, "Not much is going to happen there anyway. There's not even much growth, so we'll just ignore the problem."

There would be no doubt that if a smoke shack opened up in a rich white neighbourhood in Don Valley West or in St. Paul here in Toronto, there would be hell to pay. It would be closed immediately. It couldn't happen next to a school. But because it may happen on the Six Nations reserve or down in eastern Ontario, politicians look the other way.

What message does that send to young native residents on those reserves who are looking for a brighter future, a good job, for a young entrepreneur who wants to start her own business, that people are getting ahead through a life of crime? It's fuelling these other thoughts.

It is a veil of political correctness and fear that is paralyzing politicians who, one day, will look back and be ashamed that we took so long to address this issue which imprisons First Nations youth into a less bright future than if we had the courage to move things on. Hopefully, Toby's bill will provoke action to embarrass us into action.

The second aspect, quite frankly, is the fact that this starts out with illegal tobacco. So what's the big deal? Who didn't smoke a cigarette when they were a little too young, and steal it from the babysitter or mom or dad or the kid down the street? Bradley may be the exception, because he's still wearing his Boy Scout uniform underneath his suit. Others of us may have tried things from time to time.

Or people look the other way and say, "Hey, it's just cigarettes. What's the big deal?" Tobacco taxes are so high, so people are beating the government and saving a few bucks. The problem is that it has now moved on to bigger, more dangerous drugs, relationships with the Hells Angels and with Mexican drug dealers, and hard-core crime that is leading then to young girls being sold into prostitution and following those same trails.

We have let this go on for far too long. It is getting worse, not better. We've been embarrassed to take it on because of political correctness and because we dismiss

smoking as a harmless habit. That time is coming to an end, and God bless Toby Barrett, the member for Haldimand-Norfolk, in provoking action, in getting a true picture, and then forcing us to action.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's great to have an opportunity to get up and speak to this bill on the Thursday before Good Friday. What is it actually called today?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Maundy Thursday.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Maundy Thursday.

The member from Timiskaming-Cochrane talked about the need to get more information about this issue. I know, coming from a Welland riding and living very near border communities—I live just 20 minutes from the Peace Bridge in Buffalo, from the Rainbow Bridge in Niagara Falls and from the Lewiston bridge in Lewiston, New York. Quite often, we hear in the Niagara area, more than I expect they would hear in the north or in downtown Toronto, about the smuggling of drugs or other contraband across from the US borders. They even smuggle cheese, groceries and alcohol.

Many of us who live in Niagara, actually, on occasion make those trips over—

Mr. Tim Hudak: I declare my cheese.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I declare everything, actually. I have to tell you that—

Hon. James J. Bradley: He used to work at the border.

Ms. Cindy Forster: He did. I know that. And the border crossing guards, I think, do a great job, making sure that a lot of contraband cigarettes do not legally come across those borders.

I can tell you that in my shopping trips occasionally—although I haven't made those trips quite recently, because of the dollar. I used to make them more frequently, when the dollar was a little bit closer. I can say that I really haven't been across probably in six months, and then it was only to go to the airport.

We have all kinds of levels of policing here in this province and in this country. We have the RCMP, we have the Ontario Provincial Police, we have our regional police here in Toronto, the Toronto police. In Niagara Falls, we even have the parks police. All of these various authority bodies are out doing work around just the issues that the member from—

Mr. Toby Barrett: Haldimand-Norfolk.

Ms. Cindy Forster: —Haldimand-Norfolk—I should have known that—is talking about. So there are many jurisdictions actually dealing with the issue of drug smuggling and human trafficking and all of those issues.

1550

Now we're into the issues of medical marijuana. We have a government federally that is talking about legalizing marijuana in this country. With 30,000 Canadians using medical marijuana at this point in time, having that access and not having to go to the street to access marijuana for their medical needs, hopefully that will

reduce some of the drug trafficking that we see coming across our US borders.

I think this bill—is it a bill or a motion?

Mr. John Vanthof: A bill.

Ms. Cindy Forster: This bill will likely pass today and go off to committee. Hopefully, we'll be able to hear from some delegations making their presentations. We will have a look at it and make our decision at that point in time on whether it's a worthy piece or whether there are enough investigations going on within all of the various bodies that are working in this province and in this country to control the kinds of things that are in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Do you know what? There are some things I agree with and some I disagree with in this bill. I've often said in this House that assigning motives to people is not something that's very helpful here. I always hate when it's done to me and I try not to do it to others. I always feel like a real jerk when I go home, which I can be, being a bit Irish and a bit gay and a bit Oscar Wilde-like in my better moments.

Interjection: A bit gay?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: A little bit, yes.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: We love all your gay.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You like all my gay? I was making a joke about the old queens: It was easier for an old queen to get our statues out there than it was for most women. I won't go down that because I can just see that Sun headline coming at me.

I want to talk a little bit about the context and a little bit about the results of colonialism—that I think that we need a bigger framework to have this conversation in.

My discomfort with the bill is not—because I think that the member is a very thoughtful guy, who I have great respect for. I've always admired his work and his advocacy for people with disabilities. He's a very independent and thoughtful guy. I always enjoy when MPP Barrett, the member for Haldimand-Norfolk, presents bills here, because they're always creative and they always come from a thoughtful and original mind and a man with great integrity. When I'm speaking about this, my concerns are sincere and they're not to diminish this.

I spent about a dozen years of my life working on the streets of Winnipeg with the most marginalized kids, and too many of them were Cree, Ojibway and Lakota children. We often have this thing about protecting our children from some sort of predator, some guy in a trench coat in the local park. That mythology is so very dangerous, because the people who kidnap, destroy, rape and give drugs to our children are not strangers. They are, 80% or 90% of the time, the hockey coach, the priest, the mom, the dad, the uncle Bob who everyone liked and who was always so friendly with the children—people in places of trust. I've always had this difficulty. It was this criminalization of the stranger that has always bothered me, because not only is it wrong, it's one of the

things that makes children really vulnerable because it has us looking over here.

When I became a foster parent, I had to answer 17 pages of handwritten notes on the relationship between pedophilia and homosexuality. I always found, when I was a parent, that almost all of the kids who had been sexually or physically abused in child care and in fostering were from nice, suburban middle-class families where the born kids got the key to the house and the foster kids had to wait on the front lawn until someone “safe” came home. It's this destruction of that.

If we're really concerned about trafficking and children and we really want to have an inquiry, we can start with indigenous missing and murdered women. We could walk two or three blocks from this place and go to Covenant House—every MPP should spend a day there—and talk to the kids from across this province and hear their stories. Some of them have been kidnapped. Some of them have been raped. Many of them have been horribly and violently abused. I would hope, since that's the vast majority of that, that if we were doing an inquiry, we wouldn't have to look much further than the back-yard.

Also, indigenous people have a real problem: colonialization and the fact that we're all treaty people. We benefited from these treaties. We dammed those lakes and rivers. We farmed those fields. We cut those trees. We built those cities. One of the proudest things I did when I was mayor was when I and the mayor of Saskatoon were the first two mayors in Canada to do treaty entitlement settlements. If you go to Winnipeg or Regina, you'll see that the Hilton hotels and the commercial office buildings are owned by First Nations. As my friend Dan Chief said, “We don't need another 10,000 acres of trees; we need a real economy.”

Here in Ontario, this makes me very sad. We talk about tobacco—the only parts of the economy we abandoned to the First Nations were gambling and tobacco. Look at Grand River Enterprises; look at those. My father died at 63 of lung cancer. He was a smoker. I'm not a big fan of it, but the only independent, successful aboriginal businesses right now are in the areas of the sin things, the things we don't like: tobacco and gambling.

Look at what Chief Hill has done at Six Nations. They have 17 solar projects. They're now one of the largest sources of revenue. Under the Green Energy Act, the Six Nations of the Thames is now one of the largest providers, and they get royalties all across the Haldimand tract in the member's constituency.

I always believed that if you want to lift people up and you want to build people up, restore the economy. The only new thing that we've put out there that the First Nations could seize was the Green Energy Act, the solar and wind. The handful of First Nations that had the money to do that have transformed that, and now you're seeing other pillars coming around that. But at least the wealth from tobacco and the wealth from gambling provided something. I would like to see First Nations—and then you're really lifting people up.

We keep on chasing down the legal contraband tobacco, and they take us to court and we lose every single case. We shouldn't treat them differently than Macdonald or Rothman's; they should meet the same standards as everything else.

I wish I had more time because I think this is a too narrowly framed discussion, and there are other things that we need to be more concerned about. A good job doesn't solve every social problem, but a stronger economy and more choices in life are the best way to get out of poverty. I hope the member would work with us towards a bigger framework to solve a problem that affects more people than some of the things he's chasing here, and I say that with the greatest of respect to my friend.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I commend the member from Haldimand-Norfolk for bringing forward this bill, the Ontario commission of inquiry into the black market trade and trafficking of people, drugs, money, tobacco and weapons act, 2016.

I just want to comment on the minister's remarks. We are trying to actually help the government. This is a very reasonable bill. It certainly doesn't touch everything, and we can't touch everything in the private members' time that we do have, but it is asking the government of Ontario for a time-limited commission to conduct an inquiry—just an inquiry—to deal with issues that bear on, certainly, the social legislative policies that we, as lawmakers, have the responsibility to fix and to better. That is our job.

His bill today talks about domestic and international trafficking of people, drugs, money, tobacco and weapons. It's calling us to look at existing laws—how can we enhance them? We're talking to the front-line people that are a bit of a patchwork of services around the province, the coordination of their speaking to each other, and trying to figure out how to stop these law-breakers. I commend him for that because he is very thoughtful in his policy development. In fact, I think he's one of the most thoughtful members we have in the caucus. He takes time. He has a background as a teacher and in working with people with addictions. He brought this forward because he sees a need for it.

1600

There is a situation in illicit trade occurring among us. For us to ignore it is for us not to be doing our jobs. I speak about human trafficking quite a lot in the Legislature. I'm happy to hear that the government is going to bring forward some type of strategy on human trafficking in the next couple of months. I have brought a private member's motion and a private member's bill in respect to human trafficking within the last 12 months.

The select committee really forced the government to look at sexual violence and harassment. In their report, they identified the province of Ontario as a hub for human trafficking. Over 90% of the girls, women and young men being trafficked are Canadian-born, which is a statistic that is staggering. The average age is 14. There

are children being lured over the Internet and social media. Yet we have a government we have been pushing so hard to do something, and it seems that it has taken so long to give those police officers, crown attorneys, judges and victim services the crucial tools to eradicate this evil practice of human trafficking.

I know this is one part that the member's bill touches upon. I fully support this bill and admire him for bringing this forward and trying to get the government to try to take action.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It is my honour to rise today and speak in strong support of my colleague's bill, Bill 162, the Commission of Inquiry into Illegal Trade and Trafficking of People, Drugs, Money, Tobacco and Weapons Act.

As PC critic for community safety and correctional services, I applaud the member for Haldimand-Norfolk for bringing forward this bill, as these black market criminal networks have deep roots throughout the province that must be eradicated.

Ontario, along with Quebec, has the highest concentration of contraband tobacco manufacturing operations, the majority of high-volume smuggling points and the largest number of consumers of contraband tobacco, according to the RCMP. Contraband tobacco is, in fact, a serious problem. Not only does it rob store owners who follow the rules, but the province loses tens of millions of dollars in tax revenue. Worst of all, children are being provided with cheap cigarettes by criminals. This problem has to be stamped out.

In addition to the black market tobacco trade, the illegal drug trade is a serious concern throughout Ontario and also in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex. Last summer, four individuals were stopped by police on the 401. The OPP seized undisclosed amounts of fentanyl, OxyContin and also other drugs when the individuals were pulled over. Further investigation uncovered multiple guns and even a knife. In 2014, Chatham-Kent police seized an estimated \$175,000 worth of cocaine, marijuana, fentanyl and other drugs as well. In addition to that, they also seized more firearms.

Last summer, I attended a meeting hosted by concerned citizens in Tilbury who were focused on the issue of human trafficking along the 401 corridor. Windsor, London and Toronto are the areas that are usually focused on, but this problem extends to communities all along the highway. The Chatham-Kent Coalition Against Human Trafficking held its first workshop in 2013. The event was called Breaking the Silence, a community workshop on human trafficking. Courageous individuals shared their stories.

An important element in tackling crime as deplorable as human trafficking is raising awareness about its prevalence throughout our province, which has been described as a major hub of smuggling. This should not be Ontario's legacy.

Organized crime requires organized crime-fighting. This bill will bring together law enforcement agencies,

scientists and experts, as well as individuals impacted by these horrible crimes. To the government I say, why not bring to light what is going on in darkness? Why not encourage people to share their stories and expertise on how to destroy these unspeakably evil crime networks? What possible justification could anyone have for being against such a commission being formed, other than the most discouraging of reasons: that perhaps the wrong party proposed the idea?

As it stands, our province is a noted hub for the worst crimes that humans are capable of. We must do more.

I'm going to finish up with just one very simple thought—although it's not simple; it's somewhat profound—The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good people to do absolutely nothing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The time provided for private members' public—oh, I'm sorry. I apologize. The member for Haldimand–Norfolk has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the input, and I appreciate the support in some quarters.

I heard concerns that this may be provocative. I don't know. Given what we're up against, I think we have to be provocative. I think it's important to maybe set aside that test of political correctness on occasion, given the seriousness of what we've been talking about in the past hour. I do regret some of the reluctance that I heard. I have always felt that we have government for a reason. However, it's clear to me, and we can certainly go on to plan B and to plan C. In our rich society, we have so many organizations—public sector, non-governmental, private sector organizations—that are working on this, and working together at the provincial, international and federal levels.

One model that I had for this—and I did spend 20 years in much of this field—was the Le Dain commission. That came out back in 1972. That commission—the analysis of illegal drugs of the day—was very comprehensive and still remains the model for me. It provided an ideal forum at the time—gosh, this was, I don't know, 40 years ago—for a frank discussion. Set the emotions aside. Set the politics aside. Have public and private hearings, informal exchanges of opinion and a literature review, obviously. Base it on research; base it on science.

I feel that there are other groups out there that are working on this and will continue to work on this, whether the Ontario government is on deck or not.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Now the time for private members' public business has expired.

ALBANIAN HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE ALBANAIS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We will first deal with ballot item 24, standing in the name of Mrs.

Albanese. Mrs. Albanese has moved second reading of Bill 145, An Act to proclaim the month of November as Albanian Heritage Month. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is referred to the committee of the whole House, unless—the member for York South–Weston.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to refer it to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is a majority of the House in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy? Agreed? Agreed.

The bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

RAE LUCKOCK AND AGNES MACPHAIL

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Now we'll deal with the second item. Madame Lalonde has moved private member's notice of motion 64. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ILLEGAL TRADE AND TRAFFICKING OF PEOPLE, DRUGS, MONEY, TOBACCO AND WEAPONS ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 CONCERNANT LA COMMISSION D'ENQUÊTE SUR LE COMMERCE ET LE TRAFIC ILLICITES DE PERSONNES, DE DROGUES, D'ARGENT, DE TABAC ET D'ARMES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We'll now deal with the third private members' ballot item this afternoon. Mr. Barrett has moved second reading of Bill 162, An Act to establish a commission of inquiry into illegal trade and trafficking of people, drugs, money, tobacco and weapons. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Second reading negated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day? I recognize the Chair of Cabinet.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Bradley has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? The motion carries.

This House stands adjourned until April 4 at 10:30 in the morning.

The House adjourned at 1611.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiques, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
		Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Scarborough–Rouge River	

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Michael Harris, Sophie Kiwala
Todd Smith, Monique Taylor
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Toby Barrett, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
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Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Cristina Martins, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
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Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Laurie Scott
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jack MacLaren
Granville Anderson, Chris Ballard
Steve Clark, Jack MacLaren
Michael Mantha, Eleanor McMahon
Monte McNaughton, Soo Wong
Vacant
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Jennifer K. French
Monte Kwinter, Amrit Mangat
Kathryn McGarry, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Daiene Vernile, Bill Walker
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

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la politique sociale**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Lorne Coe
Vic Dhillon, Amrit Mangat
Gila Martow, Kathryn McGarry
Jagmeet Singh, Peter Tabuns
Glenn Thibeault
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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